

MCLAREN 2014



Digital Animation Workshops Teachers Pack



This project is part of the McLaren 2014 Programme, produced by the Centre for the Moving Image in partnership with the National Film Board of Canada. www.mclaren2014.com

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intro

- Please introduce the idea that this workshop is coming to your class.
- That we will be creating short animation films using a suite of iPads.
- 2014 is the centenary of Scotlands most famous animator Norman McLaren.
- This workshop will introduce his techniques and the fundamentals of animation.
- A highly skilled animator will deliver the workshop.

about

- 2014 marks the centenary of pioneering Scottish artist Norman McLaren. He was a genius of the moving image, an experimental filmmaker, electronic music pioneer, a celebrated animator and world-renowned artist. McLaren's animation techniques and experiments broke new ground and were described as 'something new in the art of drawing' by Pablo Picasso.
- Norman McLaren was born on the 11th of April 1914 in Stirling, Scotland.
- Whilst studying at The Glasgow School of Art, McLaren's early films caught the attention of fellow Scot John Grierson, the first Canadian Government Film Commissioner of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB). He invited McLaren to Quebec, where McLaren emigrated in the late 30s (DATE TBC) and where he produced his most important films until his death in 1987.
- McLaren's work reveals astounding inventiveness and is shaped by a passion for surrealism, dance and music. He has influenced generations of artists, filmmakers and musicians, from Picasso and Truffaut to Lucas and Linklater.
- Scotland in 2014 will also see the second year of Homecoming, Glasgow will host the XX Commonwealth Games, and the nation will remember the 700th Anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn.
- This workshop is part of the McLaren 2014 Programme. McLaren 2014 is part of the Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme and part of Homecoming Scotland 2014. The McLaren 2014 Programme has been produced by the Centre for the Moving Image in partnership with the National Film Board of Canada. www.mclaren2014.com

A longer essay about Norman McLaren can be found in the appendices

what is animation?

- Animation is breathing life into things that don't normally move.
- By creating a series of still images, that when shown back quickly one after the other, give the impression that something is moving.
- Norman McLaren said: What happens BETWEEN each frame is more important than what happens ON each frame.

Ask children what types of animation they know about, (this is sometimes tricky if you are not sure yourself, but) it is a good one to get children discussing film, and they will have lots of ideas and peer learning works well here. Find out more about the five main types of animation here:

www.movingimageeducation.org/create/production/animation

preparation before your workshop

- The workshops coming to your class are closely linked to the films of Norman McLaren, and it would be great if you watched and discussed (at least) the first two films with your class.
- There will only be time for each student/class to work with one technique; and so watching some films and carrying out some of the activities will help you make the best choice for your class.
- Please use as much of this document as you can to get the best out of your forthcoming workshop.
- Remember to send home, and get all parents/guardians to sign the release agreement on page 28 before the workshop PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SIGNED DOCUMENT IS ESSENTIAL FOR US TO BE ABLE TO UPLOAD THE SHORT ANIMATION FILM CREATED BY YOUR STUDENTS ON OUR WEBSITE.
- Timing is one of the main things your students will learn about during the workshop. And you can help them by revising their 8-times-table. Because we animate at 8 frames a second, it helps to know if you need something to last 2 seconds, they would need 16 images, etc, etc.

le merle

1958

4 minutes 39

[link to watch the film online](#)

http://www.nfb.ca/film/le_merle

brief film summary

Norman McLaren uses simple white cut-outs shapes to animate on pastel backgrounds to accompany an old French-Canadian nonsense song. (Le Merle means The Blackbird in french)



how the film relates to the workshop

During the cut-out animation workshop, children will work on an iPad using the same four shapes Norman McLaren used to create this animation. Each shape can be used once or multiple times then scaled, rotated and moved to create movement.

blinkity blank

1955

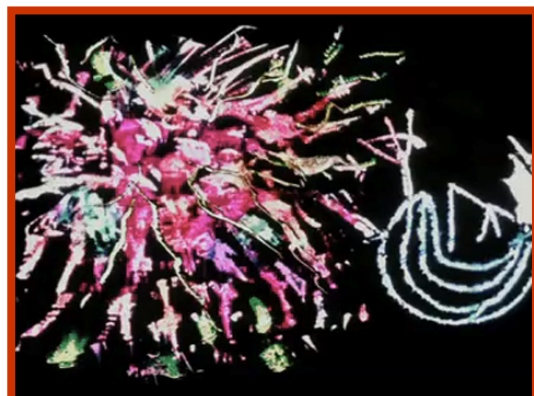
5 minutes 17

[link to watch the film online](#)

http://www.nfb.ca/film/blinkity_blank_fr

brief film summary

An experimental film using intermittent animation and spasmodic imagery. Playing with the laws relating to persistence of vision and after-image on the retina of the eye, McLaren etched the pictures directly onto blank film using a razor blades, sewing needles and pen-knife to create vivid, rhythmical effects.



how the film relates to the workshop

During the etch on film workshop, children work on an iPad using techniques similar to that which Norman McLaren used to create this film. McLaren worked on a very small 35mm area, whereas in the workshop the children will have the whole of the iPad's surface to draw on.

other valuable films

Synchromy

<http://www.nfb.ca/film/synchromy>

A visually striking film where McLaren synchronises a self-composed electronic soundtrack to a bold, multicoloured animation of stripes and block shapes.

A Chairy Tale

http://www.nfb.ca/film/a_chairy_tale

In this Oscar nominated short film, a chair refuses to be sat upon, forcing a young man to perform a sort of dance with the chair.

Pas de deux

http://www.nfb.ca/film/pas_de_deux_en

This short film is a study of the choreography of ballet. The dancers perform against a bare, black set creating a dream-like, hypnotic effect.



history timeline exercise

SOC 2-06a: Having selected a significant individual from the past, I can contribute to a discussion on the influence of their actions, then and since.

SCN 2-20a: Through research and discussion I have an appreciation of the contribution that individuals are making to scientific discovery and invention and the impact this has made on society.

intro

This exercise will help pupils understand the historical period in which McLaren lived and worked. Pupils will work collaboratively to compare a timeline of McLaren's life and work with a timeline of significant events in the history of the moving image.

teachers prep

Print copies of the five worksheets with enough for each group, you will need versions of those with & without text. Or (if you are confident with two-sided photocopying and that your class won't peek) you could print the sheets without text onto the back of the masters.

how to

Step 1: Split the class into groups of 4 or 6. Ask them to create a top 8 list of significant historical events in the last 100 years. Collate and discuss the responses from the groups into a timeline on the class board.

Step 2: Give each group the 8 moving image timeline cards that show only the picture. (If you are using the double sided cards then the groups are not to turn over the cards until instructed!) On the board, write the significant dates of the events onto the class timeline. They are: 1892, 1895, 1926, 1937, 1969, 1989, 1995 and 2010. Ask each group to discuss what they think each image represents and what part of the timeline it is from. Each group should sort the cards into the chronological order they think is correct. Discuss the responses from each group as a whole class.

Step 3: Ask the groups to turn over the cards (or hand out the second sheets with the facts on) and read the information and see how close they were in their estimations. Ask the groups if there was anything puzzling or surprising about the cards. Add one set of the moving image timeline cards to the class board.

Step 4: Hand out the McLaren timeline cards and add those to the class timeline. Useful to point out to pupils that McLaren was working at an exciting and adventurous time for filmmaking and animation. McLaren pioneered many new animation and filmmaking techniques.

First animation screened 1892

Charles-Émile Reynaud created the Praxinoscope in 1877 and then at the Théâtre Optique he projected his first hand painted animation in public "Pauvre Pierrot".



FACTOID

Charles-Émile Reynaud life ended sadly. Having been a celebrated entertainer for a few short years, his work was overshadowed by the arrival of film, and he threw much of his equipment into the River Seine

First live-action film 1895

Two French brothers, Louis & August Lumiere created a movie camera and projector, capable of projecting an image that can be seen by large groups of people.



FACTOID

When they projected their film called "Train Pulling into a Station" in 1896 people were so scared by the image of the train coming toward them - they ran from the cinema!

First film with sound 1926

Don Juan was the first film with a synched soundtrack. The first 'talkie' (a film with synched voices) was released one year later - titled The Jazz Singer.



FACTOID

Synch sound was one of the worlds first large scale technology format wars. Similar to today's battle today between iOS, Android and Blackberry. Vitaphone was the first - but Movietone won, because it was more practical

Snow White released 1937

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs is the first feature length cel animated feature film. Produced by Walt Disney Productions, based on the German fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm.



FACTOID

The film cost nearly one million pounds to make; and in 1937 that was massive amount. At todays prices that would be about £57 million. Disney had to mortgage his house and most of Hollywood thought he was crazy



Live TV moon landing 1969

British audiences watched man's first steps on the moon. Some estimate a staggering 600 million people (one-fifth of the world's population at the time) watched or listened live.



FACTOID

Neil Armstrong was a quiet man. After a few years touring, he took a teaching job at a university. He rarely talked of his experiences. Once asked what it had meant to him, he replied it had made him feel "very, very small"

Wallace & Gromit 1989

The first in the series A Grand Day Out, created by Nick Park, was aired. The series centres on Wallace, an absent-minded inventor and cheese enthusiast, & Gromit, a silent yet intelligent dog.



FACTOID

In 2013 artists, designers and celebrities painted 81 fibreglass Gromits, to raise money for charity. These were all sold at auction for over £2.3 million pounds

Toy Story Released 1995

The first feature-length computer-animated film and the first film produced by Pixar, directed by John Lasseter, and released by Walt Disney Pictures.

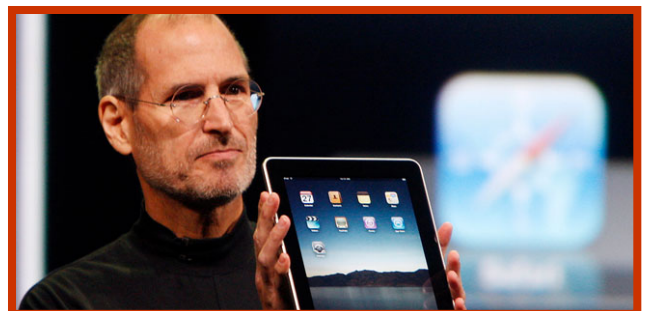


FACTOID

The film has 114,240 frames of animation, to make over 77 minutes of animation, spread across 1,561 shots. Each frame took from 45 minutes up to 30 hours to render, depending on its complexity

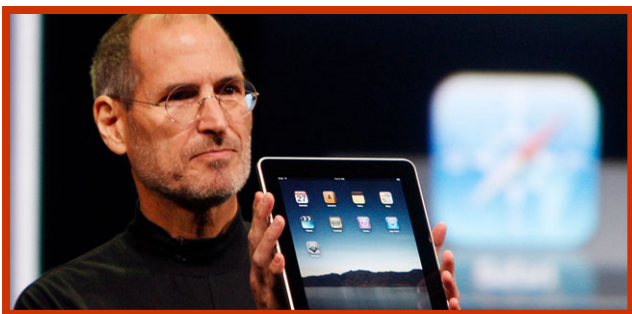
iPad released 2010

Apple claimed it to be: "a revolutionary device for web, email, watching videos, enjoying photos, listening to music, playing games, reading e-books and much more".



FACTOID

300,000 iPads were sold on their first day of availability. And within four years of release (ie today) tablet devices sell more per year than desktop computers



Norman McLaren's birth 1914

McLaren was born in Stirling. At school he developed a particular interest in painting, & went to Glasgow School of Art to study interior design.

**THE GLASGOW
SCHOOL OF ART**

FACTOID

At college he switched to film-making. McLaren said: "drawing & painting have been around for 2000 years at least, but here is a new art, just begun, which is the art of today!!"

McLaren moves to Canada 1941

McLaren was invited to work at the recently founded National Film Board. Here he was able to develop his unique animation techniques. He lived in Canada for the rest of his life.



FACTOID

The National Film Board of Canada was started by another British man; documentary film-maker John Grierson. Initially films were to help the war effort (WW2) but it became one of the world's most respected film institutions

Neighbours released 1952

For the film McLaren used a technique called pixillation, it is anti-war parable about two men who fight over a flower. Neighbours is his most celebrated film and won him an Oscar in 1953.



FACTOID

Pixillation is where human beings are animated frame by frame like cartoon characters. It is fun to experiment with, and you don't have to build sets or design models. Add in other objects like chairs to move around of their own accord

Pas de deux released 1968

This short film is a love story and a study of the choreography of ballet. A bare, black set with the figures of dancers Margaret Mercier and Vincent Warren create a dream-like, hypnotic effect.



FACTOID

The film won 19 awards, including an Oscar nomination. The film is choreographed to Romanian pan pipe music

blinkity blank: take a line for a walk

EXA 2-03a: I can create and present work that shows developing skill in using the visual elements and concepts.

intro

This exercise explores the playful and abstract way McLaren represents sound and emotion in the film *Blinkity Blank*. McLaren would etch his drawings directly onto film stock in what feels like a very spontaneous and freestyle manner. Similarly, the abstract artist Paul Klee said: *'A line is a dot that went for a walk.'*

how to

Step 1: Let your pencil cover the paper randomly until the teacher says stop. Can you see any patterns or shapes in your drawing? What would you call the drawing?

Step 2: Use the concept to draw a portrait of a friend. Don't lift the pencil off the paper until you are finished.

Step 3: Use the same techniques to draw quick sketches of birds, animals, fish, fruit etc.

Step 4: Listen to different excerpts of music chosen for their emotional quality, like ANGER, HAPPINESS, FEAR, SADNESS, LOVE etc. Use the same technique to draw a sketch of each piece of music and each emotion. What emotions have you heard and do the shapes you've drawn match the emotions?

extensions

- A fun continuation is to create drawings without looking. Draw another portrait or still life and don't take the pencil off the paper until you are finished.
- Use pastels or paint to fill in the different shapes.

blinkity blank: feel the sounds

EXA 2-18a/ EXA 2-05a: Inspired by a range of stimuli, and working on my own and/or with others, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through musical activities and art and design.

intro

A constant theme running through all of McLaren's films is that the sounds and music inspire the movement and shapes you see on the screen. This activity will explore the relationship between sounds and images and ask pupils to make visual representations of the sounds they hear.

how to

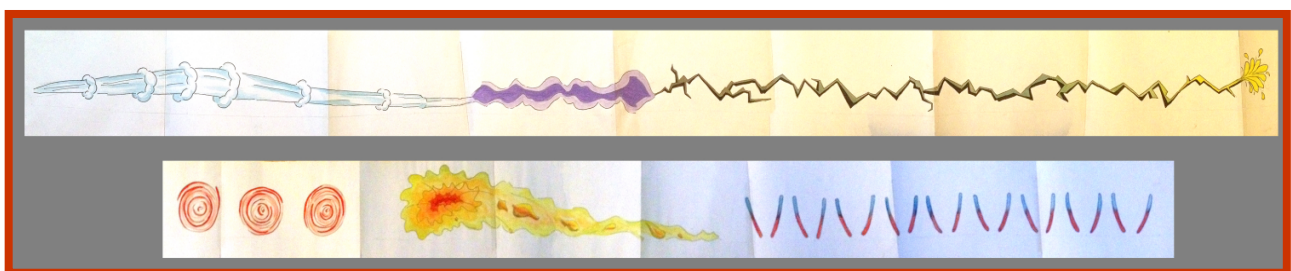
Collect a variety of sounds or instruments for this activity. This could be a collection of tunes or tuneless percussion instruments you play in class, or a bunch of sound effects you find on the Internet.

Step1: Play a number of the sounds and instruments. After each one ask the pupils to draw a doodle of how they see the sound. What movement does it have? Discuss and compare what different pupils have drawn. Ask pupils to explain and justify their drawings. Remember there is no wrong answer!

Step 2: organise the class in groups of 4 or 6 and ask them to create short sound stories of no longer than 30 secs or 1 min. It might be useful for each group to consider a theme for their sound story, such as: lunch time, a storm, birthday party, the playground, horror, celebration, winter, summer, spring, autumn, night time, daytime, alien invasion etc.

Step 3: create artwork that visualises different parts of the sound story. This can be quickly completed in pencil or pen or given more time by using other media such as paint or pastels.

Step 4: groups can present and perform their sound stories in front of the class.



suggestions of sounds

- Tuned or tuneless percussion from the music room
- Rain stick
- String
- Chalk
- Ruler on table
- The school bell
- Gym whistle
- Lunch - chatter, scraping cutlery, crinkly wrapping
- Clapping
- Bouncing balls
- Typing

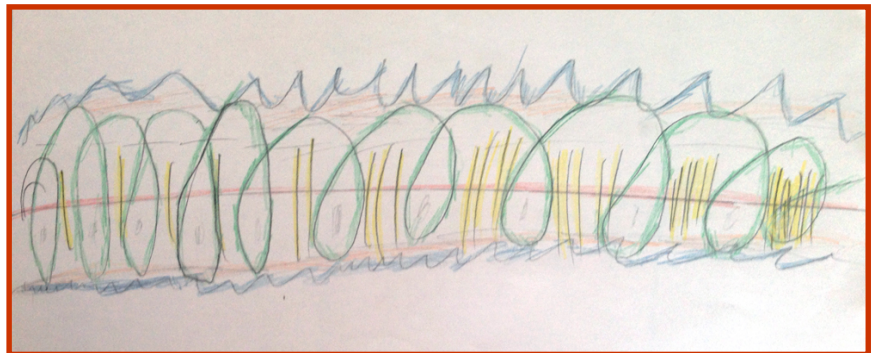


where to find sounds online

www.movingimageeducation.org/resources/classroom-tools/found-footage/sounds

extensions

- Listen to some of the pieces from Holst's The Planets. Discuss the emotion and movements of each piece. Ask the pupils to paint, draw or dance visualisations of the music and emotion.
- Listen to Holst's Planets or other classical music and write 'train of thought' poetry inspired by the words, feelings and images that come into your imagination whilst listening to it.
- Present your poetry as shape poems.



le merle: art activity

EXA 2-02a: I have the opportunity to choose and explore an extended range of media and technologies to create images and objects, comparing and combining them for specific tasks.

MTH 2-16c: I can draw 2D shapes and make representations of 3D objects using an appropriate range of methods and efficient use of resources.

intro

In the short film Le Merle, McLaren used very simple 2D shapes to animate the movement and expression of the traditional French song. This exercise is perfect preparation for one of the tasks the children will be doing when working with the professional animator and iPads.

teachers prep

Print multiple copies of the shapes worksheet.

how to

Step 1: Use multiple printouts of the Le Merle shapes. Give at least 2 sheets per pupil or pair. The pupils then carefully cut out the shapes.

Step 2: In pairs, each child has to create an animal using as few shapes as possible. Can their partner guess what the animal is?

- Encourage the pupils to discuss how it might move across the paper. How would the shapes change as it moved? How could you use movement to make one shape animal change into a new one?
- Discuss as a class how the shape animals could be improved.
- Can the pupils suggest ways to create the animal using less shapes? (teachers note: less shapes are a real advantage when you start creating animation on the app, because there is less to keep moving)



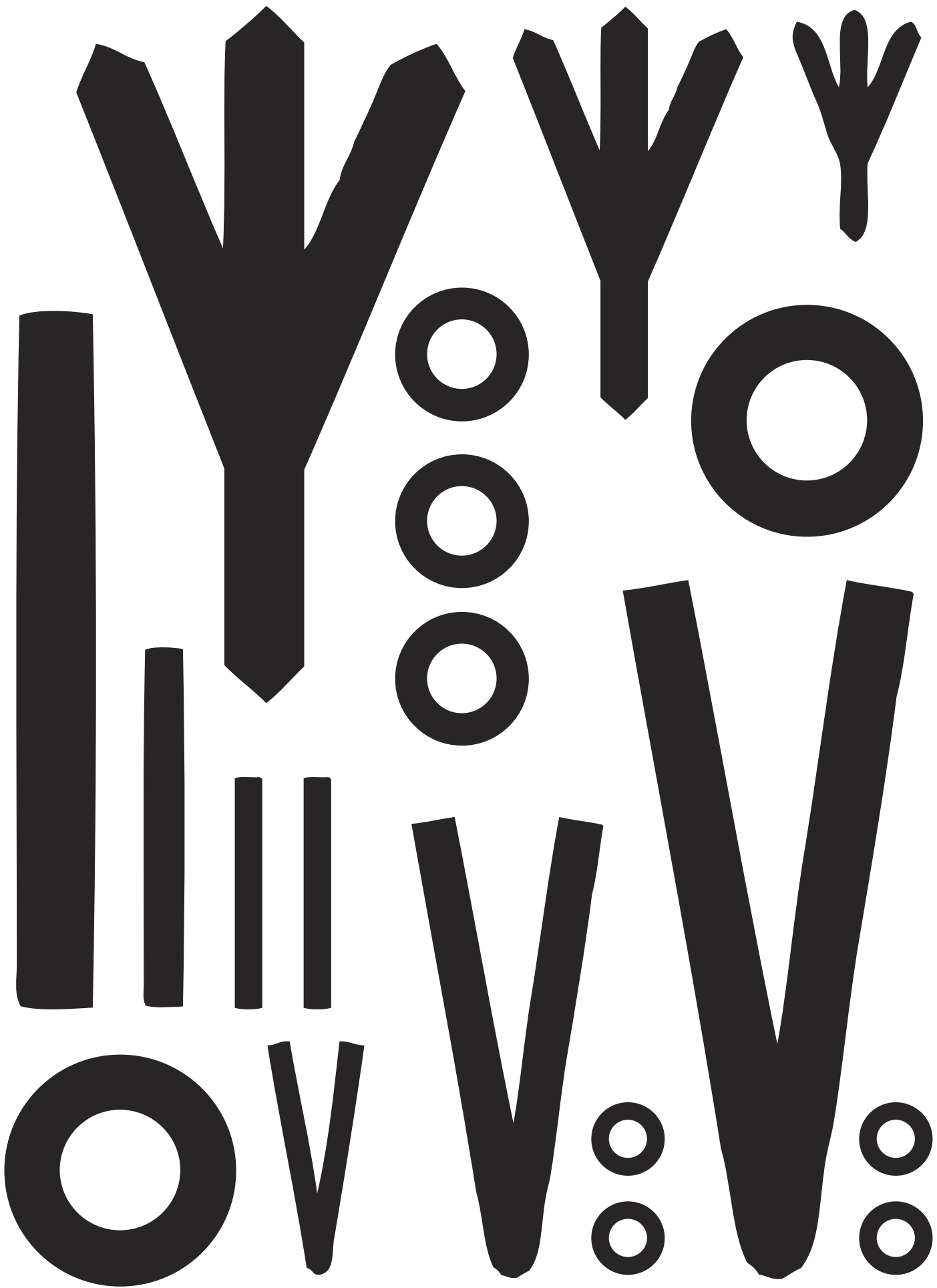
Step 3: Ask the pairs to explore what other shapes or objects that the cut-out shapes could be used to represent. Once again ask other pairs to guess what it is they have made from the shapes.

Step 4: Pupils should choose their favourite cut-out shape animal or object to make a print / collage / stencil artwork.

- Either use the original cutouts, and fix these down, and pastels to rub around the edge of the cut out stencils. This also gives a nice blurry effect.
- Or, paint a background mixing colours and tones. Next, pupils can use painted matchsticks or lollipop sticks to create their shapes on top. The matchsticks and lollipops could also be used to print their shapes on top of the background.
- Or, pupils can use masking tape to create their shapes on paper. Then paint a washed colour background over the top of the masking tape. When the paint has dried the pupils then remove the masking tape to reveal their shape animals and objects.

extension

- Use tangram shapes to explore other abstract images. The excellent short animated film 'Laughing Moon' is made entirely with tangram shapes and available on the Glow website 'Screening shorts'
- This tutorial gives lots of ideas of how to use 'Laughing Moon' in class.
- <http://vimeo.com/52791467>



le merle: song activity

EXA 2-18a/ EXA 2-05a: Inspired by a range of stimuli, and working on my own and/or with others, I can express and communicate my ideas, thoughts and feelings through musical activities and art and design.

intro

Le Merle was inspired by a traditional French nonsense song. This exercise explores how you could plan an animation and create a storyboard for a traditional Scots children's song. A storyboard is what filmmakers and animators use to plan their work before they film it.

how to

Step 1: Listen to a traditional children's song in Scots. Here are 3 examples you may wish to use:

THREE CRAWs

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BngJkGZe1k>

THE WEE KIRKUDBRIGHT CENTIPEDE

www.educationscotland.gov.uk/scotlandssongs/primary/theweekirkcudbrightcentipede.asp

KATIE BEARDIE

<http://www.scottishcultureonline.com/blogs/scots-songs-for-kids/#katiebairdie>

Step 2: Organise the class into pairs or groups of 4. The groups can use matchsticks, lollipop sticks or cut-out shapes to create the animals that feature in the songs. Make sure that their animals have more than one part – this is important for animation and will give their animal movement and flexibility.

Step 3: Once they are happy with their animals, the groups can experiment with how the shapes would move and change to reflect the different parts of the song.

Step 4: Create a storyboard combining drawings of their shapes with the matching lines from the song underneath each drawing.

There is a good storyboard template here:

<http://www.movingimageeducation.org/files/pdfs/storyboard.pdf>

blinkity blank: art activity

EXA 2-03a: I can create and present work that shows developing skill in using the visual elements and concepts.

intro

In Blinkity Blank, Norman McLaren scratched his animated drawings directly and spontaneously onto the film stock. This exercise explores ways to create bold Scratch paintings inspired by the imagery of Blinkity Blank.

how to

Step 1: Apply a thick multicoloured background of shapes and patterns onto heavy paper or card using wax crayons or oil pastels. Do not leave any white space or uncoloured areas.

Step 2: Mix black poster paint with a few drops of dishwashing liquid (the ratio is about a drop of liquid to a tablespoon of paint) and mix well.

Use a foam brush or large paint brush to apply a thick layer of black paint. Try to make it as even as possible. The paint will need to be completely dry before you are ready to scratch designs and patterns into it.

Step 3: Using pencil and paper, experiment with patterns, designs or animal doodles that you could scratch onto the black paint. Do you wish to give the artwork a border?

Use paper clips, cocktail sticks, the other end of a paintbrush, a pencil or modelling tool to scratch your chosen design on to the black paint. You can also scratch out entire sections of paint to fill in some of the shapes with solid colour.

Step 4: You could also achieve a similar artistic effect by creating a mono print. Like in 'Step 3' draw a design / pattern / animal in pencil onto a sheet of A4 paper. Using printing inks, completely ink another sheet of A4 paper. Be careful not to apply too much ink. Place your drawing on top of the inked sheet and trace firmly over your drawing. When you separate the two sheets you should be left with a positive and negative printed image of your drawing.

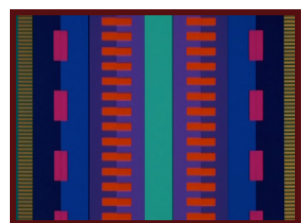
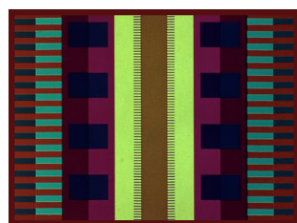
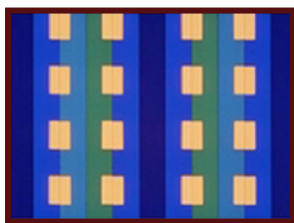
synchronomy: art activity

MTH 2-19a: I can illustrate the lines of symmetry for a range of 2D shapes and apply my understanding to create and complete symmetrical pictures and patterns.

EXA 2-07a: I can respond to the work of artists and designers by discussing my thoughts and feelings. I can give and accept constructive comment on my own and others' work.

intro

We probably won't use the synchronomy app in your workshop session, however there is lots to explore and have fun with, especially with the relationship and harmony between sound and music. This exercise will explore making tiled and symmetrical repeated patterns inspired by the graphics from Synchronomy.



how to

Step 1: As a class discuss still examples from the film Synchronomy. Can the pupils find examples of repeated patterns or symmetry? What is interesting about the use of shape and colour? Do they like or dislike the artwork? Does the artwork match the soundtrack? What other artwork does it remind them of?

Step 2: Ask the pupils to come up with new repeated or symmetrical patterns to accompany the soundtrack of Synchronomy. Pupils can plan their ideas using large squared paper.

Step 3: Using bright coloured A4 paper and coloured gummy squares, pupils can carefully cut and stick accurate copies of their Synchronomy patterns.

Step 4: Pupils can provide self and peer assessment as to how well their finished designs would work with McLaren's edgy electronic soundtrack. Display all the finished pieces in a row and play the soundtrack from Synchronomy. Once again ask the class to feedback which artwork has been successful and why.

twenty-four still images from Le Merle

This three second sequence from Le Merle starts at about 1 minute 34 seconds. It shows 24 individual still images from the film. McLaren actually created 24 frames for every second of animation, however we have just shown the stills as if he had created 8 frames a second, as this is how the children will work in class with the iPads.



twenty-four still images from Blinky Blank

This three second sequence from the film Blinky Blank starts at about 2 minutes 53 seconds. It shows 24 individual still images from the film. McLaren actually created 24 frames for every second of animation, however we have just shown the stills as if he had created 8 frames a second, as this is how the children will work in class with the iPads.



Extract from the essay: A Filmmaker For All Seasons” courtesy of Don McWilliams

“A work of art has to have cohesiveness and consistency, but not so much cohesiveness and consistency as to become boring, and not so much non-cohesiveness as to fall apart. It has to be organically linked, and yet it must have surprises in it that you don’t expect, but surprises that are relevant to the whole work.”

Norman McLaren was born in Stirling, Scotland in 1914 and died in Quebec, Canada in 1987. He made his first film in 1934 in Scotland, but for most of his film career, from 1941 to 1984, he lived and worked in Canada at the National Film Board of Canada.

As a high school student, it was painting and drawing that particularly interested McLaren; at the age of 18, he enrolled at the Glasgow School of Art, but he did not earn a graduation diploma. His involvement in extra-curricular student filmmaking diverted him from completing his assignments. Movies had been entertainment for McLaren until he joined a film society at the art school in 1934. There he saw the films of the Russians, Eisenstein and Pudovkin.

“I thought what a great medium! It was exciting and I said if you can do that, why bother with drawing and painting. They’ve been around for two thousand years at least, but here is a new art, just begun, which is the art of today.”

The Russian films were silent and McLaren was seized by their editing or montage – montage as collision. The drama of montage excited McLaren. In this rapid flow of imagery he saw a mirror of the way in which the mind works.

“The intimacy of the intercutting, the wide variety of viewpoints of the subject matter. Cutting from one thing to another is rather similar to the mental process of human beings. It’s instantaneous, A sudden juxtaposition of two things very different from each other, as in a dream. The spirit is able to jump around with an extreme rapidity in spite of the laws of logic.”

All McLaren’s student films showed his fascination with technique. Camera Makes Whoopee, made with a 16mm camera that allowed for an array of in-camera effects, was an account of the 1935 annual student ball. It included every possible camera trick. Appropriately, one sees the camera going to bed at the end of the film. John Grierson juried the 1936 Scottish Amateur Film Festival. There were several films from the club in the festival. Grierson was harsh with their obsession with technique, and later in his hotel room over a whisky offered McLaren a job at the British General Post Office Film Unit along with some brutal criticism.

“You’ve got lots of imagination, trying all kinds of new things, but totally undisciplined, unharnessed. You don’t know how to make a film and we’re going to knock some discipline into you.” These were his very words: knock some discipline into you.”

McLaren was at the GPO Film Unit from 1936 until 1939, In those three years, he, learnt the craft of filmmaking, making “nuts and bolts” documentaries. He did, however, make his first animated film, Love on the Wing.

In 1939, McLaren emigrated to New York. There he found life economically difficult; yet artistically fruitful. He made nine short hand-drawn films. Most were subsidised by the wonderfully eccentric and perceptive Baroness Von Rebay, curator of the Museum of Non-Objective Art (later the Guggenheim). She added McLaren to her stable of struggling artists (Jackson Pollock was another one). Three of these hand-made films bore another McLaren trademark – that of hand-drawn sound. He had experimented with hand-drawn sound at the GPO, having found accidentally that by making marks with pen and ink on the soundtrack area of the film, he could make music. The placing of patterns on the soundtrack area was one of the earliest methods of making “electronic music”; and McLaren was one of several such pioneers.

In October of 1941, McLaren emigrated to Canada to rejoin John Grierson at the recently founded National Film Board of Canada, of which Grierson was the founder and head. Here McLaren, freed from economic worries, burst forth and made 45 films in the next 42 years, in a array of techniques. In 1942, at Grierson’s behest, he founded the NFB animation studio and inculcated a whole generation of animators in his philosophy. It was not only an emphasis on individual, experimental work that McLaren inculcated. There was also his insistence on motion as the heart of cinema.

“... the mobile element of film can almost be broken down into two components, the form of the moving object, and the motion itself.... for instance, a photographed man, a cartoon man, an animal, or even a simple triangle or blob, can all leap in such a way that the viewer has an impression of joy, sadness, tiredness, youth, or old age. If examined carefully frame by frame on a motion picture strip, the various movements expressing joy will all have common factors of timing, tempo, acceleration, and deceleration...”

McLaren believed “how it moves is more important than what moves” This is obvious in action movies, but also the great Hollywood editor, Walter Murch, thought the way a character blinks his/ her eyes tells as much of the psychology of the character, as what he says.

There is also McLaren's definitive definition of animation.

"Animation is not the art of Drawings-that –move but rather the art of Movements –that-are-drawn.

What happens BETWEEN each frame is more important than what happens ON each frame.

*Therefore ANIMATION is the art of manipulating the invisible interstices between frames."*⁴

Between the frames, the animator decides on how much to change the position from the previous frame – he/she designs the motion.

McLaren once said "that almost all of my films start with a curiosity about technique." It is a dangerous statement since it suggests that McLaren was only a technician, an experimenter.

"I must say that maybe I am just an experimenter. But I try not to be... I think it is much more important and much more difficult to be an artist.

I always have the audience in the back of my mind. Very often an ill-defined audience, sometimes a more clearly defined audience. When making *Rythmetic* I thought about children and hoped it would help children be interested in numbers. But, even in any film, no matter how abstract, I have an audience in mind. I keep thinking of a group of people watching the film and I keep looking out for the possibility of them getting bored. I'm terrified of letting an audience get bored."

McLaren was, in fact, distressed that he rarely used film to deal with contemporary issues. Shocked by the poverty he had seen in his native Stirling as a boy, he joined the Communist party when he was fifteen. In 1936, he went to the Spanish Civil War as a cameraman. This experience marked him for ever; and he embraced pacifism. Also like many others on the left, he was deeply disillusioned by the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939 and left the party.

McLaren political self was re-awakened when he went to China in 1949 to work for UNESCO teaching Chinese artists audio-visual methods in health education. He was there when the revolution came to a climax and spent the last half of this time there working under a Communist regime.

He returned to Canada simultaneously with the outbreak of Korean War. His loyalties were pulled and the consequence was the anti-war parable, *Neighbours*, in which two men fight over a flower and kill both themselves and their families. The virtuosity was the technique of the single-frame animation of live people, what McLaren called *Pixillation*. The *Manchester Guardian* summed it up best:

*"The mood is farcical, and the audience is led laughing uproariously into a nasty little corner where McLaren, without, warning kicks it in the teeth."*⁵

For him, it was that ideal marriage of technique and the social responsibility of the artist.

On computers he stated:

"Each artist is very dependent on the state of technology at the time he's born. Michaelangelo couldn't have painted those great vaults and ceiling without the invention of that kind of architecture. Artists – this is generally speaking - if there's a technical thing invented, a person with an artist's nature is likely to take that thing and use it. We're getting young artists using computers and they make a new kind of animation, a new type of film. And that is only right and proper, that's the way it should be. I know that if I had been growing up now, I would have gone right in and got hold of a computer and done things with it. But one is a child of one's age. One is born at a certain time, one uses certain things."

McLaren did, in fact, make a film on the computer. In 1969, he spent an afternoon with a light pencil and a computer screen and made a three minute experiment, people with typical McLaren bird-like drawings. McLaren never followed up. He felt the technology too primitive at that time and that he would probably just end up repeating himself.

McLaren would undoubtedly be pleased that his films are more widely available because of the "digital" revolution – even though he might have reservations about certain films being presented in these smaller formats. After all, he designed his films for the big screen. But, undoubtedly, if McLaren had been growing up now, he would be one of the pioneers of this new means of expression.

1. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from conversations between Norman McLaren and Donald McWilliams.
2. This essay is from NFB McLaren's workshop iPad app
3. Animated Films by Norman McLaren. Documentary Film news (May, 1948) London, England.
4. Notes for a Lecture given by McLaren in Aspen, Colorado, 1956.
5. Date and circumstances unknown. Probably 1950s.
6. Manchester Guardian report from Edinburg Film Festival, Summer, 1952
7. From a letter to LaserDisc Corporation, Japan, 1983

Many thanks to Don McWilliams

Don McWilliams is a Filmmaker, Consultant for the National Film Board of Canada and McLaren 2014 Principal Artistic Consultant.

release agreement

Could signed copies of this release agreement be ready for collection on the day of the workshop?

McLaren 2014 – Centre for the Moving Image

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FOR ORIGINAL MEDIA CREATED

We are delighted that you are taking part in the McLaren 2014 Digital Animation Workshops and we hope that you will enjoy creating your own McLaren inspired animations. We are really looking forward to seeing the work you produce and sharing it online with others who might be interested.

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Work produced as part of the McLaren 2014 project. Animations created using the McLaren Workshop iPad App created by the National Film Board of Canada. Facilitated by the Centre for the Moving Image in 2014 throughout the UK.

YOUNG PERSON'S RELEASE (FOR THOSE UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE)

If creator/copyright holder is under 18 years old this release must instead be signed by the child's legal guardian:

CHILD'S NAME:

I affirm that I am the legal guardian of the child named above and therefore grant permission for copyright use by CMI as stated in the individual release by signing below:

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follow up

for the group

There will only be a short amount of time during the workshop for everyone to watch each others films. So the main part of any follow up session will be to take the time to watch the films through on vimeo.com. Make sure you include time to watch all the films and have plenty of time to discuss what they have learned.

the films

A few days after the workshop you will be able to find the films via the following link

<http://www.mclaren2014.com/workshops>

This will take you through to vimeo.com where you will find a folder with all your classes work.

teachers feedback form

Please fill in this form to help us evaluate McLaren 2014

<http://mclaren2014.polladdy.com/s/mclaren-2014-school-workshops>

Take home note

Please could copies of this sheet be handed to each participant a few days after the workshop?

Recent workshop

Your child/ward recently took part in an exciting animation project, based around the life of Norman McLaren. Over the course of the workshop they learned a number of new skills and learned about McLaren's life.

The films created by the group will be available at this URL

www.mclaren2014.com/workshops

Each class has its own dedicated page (via vimeo.com) and you can search for this by the name of the school.

Norman McLaren / McLaren 2014

You can find more about Norman McLaren and all the events that will take place to celebrate his centenary (McLaren 2014) on our website:

www.mclaren2014.com/

The National Film Board of Canada has a great selection of McLaren's films:

<http://www.nfb.ca/explore-all-directors/Norman-McLaren/>

The app that the group used during the workshop is called "McLaren's workshop". It was developed and created by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and is available to download on:

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/mclarens-workshop/id622560819?mt=8>

Currently only for iPad.



This project is part of the McLaren 2014 Programme. McLaren 2014 is part of the Glasgow 2014 Cultural Programme and part of Homecoming Scotland 2014. The McLaren 2014 Programme has been produced by the Centre for the Moving Image in partnership with the National Film Board of Canada. www.mclaren2014.com



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