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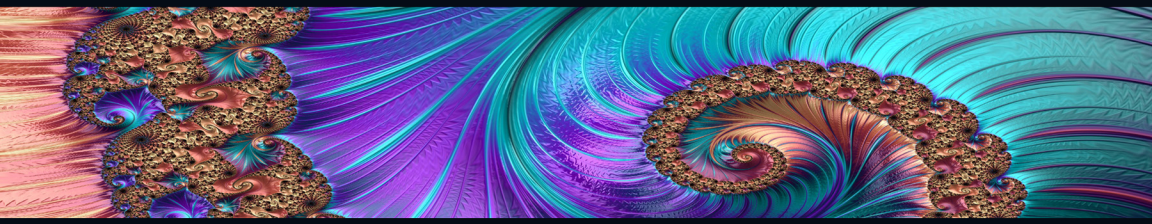

REDESIGNING ANIMATION

United Productions of America

Cinzia Bottini

CRC Press
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A FOCAL PRESS BOOK

Redesigning Animation

United Productions of America

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Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.

Paul Klee,
"Creative Credo"

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Foreword

UPA: THE EXERCISE OF SYNTHESIS

It is commonplace to call the rise of United Productions of America—UPA—a revolutionary turning point in animation history. There are many reasons for that. Within the American animation industry, at that time, artists had to follow the standards of the studios that employed them. The animators had to copy the artistic guidelines of few main creators, being faithful to the studios styles and characters.

UPA animations were low-budget, short productions with a plurality of styles expressing the free inspiration of their authors. Each film was an independent artistic proposal without commitments to the previous productions (except the Mr. Magoo and Gerald McBoing-Boing characters, who were the most relevant subjects of a few attempts at creating animated series).

The UPA team had a lot of previous experience inside the animation industry, as many of the professionals had cut their teeth in studios like Disney or Warner Bros. During World War II they were involved in many animated war propaganda films, learning how to be direct, fast and economical in their work. The popularity of TV in the early 1950s made room for many animated commercials and UPA had the leadership in that particular production.

Many UPA animators, while employed at Disney, were involved in the well-known polemic strike in the 1940s. Later some names were blacklisted after Walt Disney testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC).

UPA was created during a political conflict inside animation industry. It is natural to label its production as a counterpoint and resistance to the Disney legacy.

The book that we have in our hands now helps to follow this dichotomy. The author carefully traces the influences of the artistic movements from the first half of 20th century during the creation of UPA, including the Disney legacy. Although UPA was not identified with the Disney emphasis on photorealism, UPA filtered from Disney production those strategies that could be positive in establishing a powerful visuality in popular media.

The author is sensitive to, and comprehensively presents, the main common historical points of that particular time, but this book does not frame the importance of UPA considering only those factors.

One of the highlights is the UPA legacy in the career and filmography of many directors and studios. One example is the reference to the Zagreb Animation production and its contribution to sound design in animation, giving one step ahead of what UPA initially proposed.

The reference to the Japanese animator Osamu Tezuka is very precise, as he was a confessed admirer of Disney style and also highly influenced by UPA visuality.

Even Disney Studios was influenced by UPA and the author analyzes some of Disney productions from the 1950s, detecting those influences carefully.

Another important contribution from this book is the comprehensive analysis of many UPA films considering their creative artistic background, dialoguing with the best of fine arts, graphic design and advertising heritages.

This book establishes a better understanding of UPA's legacy. Beyond making a revolutionary contribution, UPA proposed an exercise of synthesis, revealing that, besides the differences of vision, style and political statement, UPA and Disney legacies can also be understood today as two opposite sides of the same coin.

Animation would never be the same after that experience. It was a moment of maturity.

Welcome to this journey. We could not be guided by better hands.

Heitor Capuzzo
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais,
Escola de Belas Artes

Acknowledgments

When I started this project, I could never have imagined what a formative learning experience it would be, both professionally and personally. As it happens with every doctoral dissertation turned into a book, I owe many people a debt of gratitude for all their help throughout this long journey.

I deeply thank my supervisor, Professor Heitor Capuzzo; my cosupervisor, Giannalberto Bendazzi; and Professor Vibeke Sorensen, chair of the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore for showing sincere compassion and offering unwavering moral support during a personally difficult stage of my doctoral studies. I am also grateful for all their suggestions, critiques and observations that guided me in this research project, as well as their dedication and patience.

My gratitude goes to Tee Bosustow, who graciously shared memorabilia his father had collected. I also thank all the enthusiastic staff of the American archives and libraries that I visited: Howard Prouty and Jenny Romero, archivists of the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills; Mark Quigley, archivist of the UCLA Film & Television Archive; Michelle Harvey, archivist of the MoMA archives in New York City; and Brent Phillips, media specialist and processing archivist at the Fales Library and Special Collections of New York University.

Special appreciation also goes to those who shared their observations and comments on the general topic: Adam Abraham, who provided invaluable information and sent me a copy of *The Boing-Boing Show* animated shorts; Professor Emerita Marsha Kinder; Professor Ben Alvin Shedd; Associate Professor Jaroslaw Kapuscinski; Associate Professor Hans-Martin Rall; Assistant Professor Kathrin Albers; and the many experts on animated cinema and UPA who kindly agreed to be interviewed and shared their memories and opinions with me. Among them, I would like to mention

UPA animators Alan Zaslove, Willis Pyle, Howard Beckerman and Fred Crippen; UPA sound designer Joe Siracusa; animators Ishu Patel and Eric Goldberg; artist Hans Bacher; and animation historians Maureen Furniss and Karl F. Cohen.

I thank the School of Art, Design and Media and Nanyang Technological University for their support and generosity in granting the necessary funds for this research. I am especially grateful to Associate Professor Michael J. K. Walsh, Associate Chair (Research) at ADM; Hong Bee Kuen, manager of the Ph.D. program at ADM; and all the ADM librarians, particularly Phoebe Lim Choon Lan and V. Somasundram.

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I thank Katherine Barnhart, who shared her opinions on this work, edited it and patiently answered all my queries during the process; and I am sincerely grateful to Sean Connelly, Executive Editor of CRC Press, who enthusiastically decided to publish my research, as well as Jessica Vega, Editorial Assistant, who helped me along the way.

I finally thank my genuinely sincere friends, supporters and motivators Valentina Guzzardo and Michela Vuga. No words are enough to acknowledge all the love and patience that my husband, Andrea Fusi, has shown me during this challenging period of our life together. I dedicate this study to him and our beloved daughter, Matilde Antonietta.

Summary

United Productions of America (UPA) was a small American animation studio founded in 1943 by three former Disney employees who had previously taken part in the infamous Disney strike. UPA succeeded in challenging Disney's supremacy in the entertainment market by creating cutting-edge animated cartoons. UPA films express a simplified audiovisual language that consists of stylized layout designs, asymmetrical compositions, colors applied flatly and in strong contrast with each other, limited animation, abstract sound and minimal scores. How did UPA artists develop these original visual and aural solutions? The innovative style was developed via the assimilation of aesthetic features already expressed by Modern painters, graphic designers, advertising men and musicians. The minimalism that characterizes Modern paintings was transferred into the advertising business and the animation industry. Graphic design and animation cross-fertilized starting in the 1940s, and UPA artists absorbed the theoretical principles applied first by Modern painters and then by Modern graphic designers. At the core of this work there is the assumption that UPA is a Modern animation studio and that UPA animated cartoons are Modern animations, because they synthesize a common minimalist tendency that was occurring in U.S. animation during the 1940s and later exploded internationally in the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, this work proposes to consider UPA animated films as case studies of a simplified audiovisual language that influenced international productions.

This study comprises five parts. First, UPA studio is framed within its historical, sociological and cultural background in order to illustrate the conditions under which UPA studio was founded, flourished and declined. An examination of the contradictory figure of Stephen (Steve) Bosustow, executive producer of the company, and the UPA production

system as possible concurrent causes of UPA films' inventiveness follows in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, Modernist stylistic features of painting, graphic design and poster advertising are explored, and their influence on UPA animations is traced. The fourth chapter analyzes UPA animated films, highlighting those stylistic elements that were groundbreaking in animated cinema at that time. Then, in order to demonstrate the impact of UPA Modernism on animation, examples of international films that show direct or indirect influences from the UPA aesthetic are considered in Chapter 5. Finally, the Conclusion considers the UPA legacy and clarifies the way in which graphic Modernism determined UPA's new attitude toward animation. This study also suggests the relevance of UPA in the search for a theoretical definition of animated cinema, as carried on by animation historians since the 1950s. Ultimately, it firmly situates UPA within the history of animation, attributing it a crucial role in the origins of Modern animation.

Notes

The source *Steve Bosustow's UPA collection, in the care of his son, Tee Bosustow* (abbreviated form: *Steve Bosustow's UPA collection*) refers to materials that were produced by the animation studio United Productions of America (UPA), collected by UPA executive producer Stephen Bosustow and preserved to the present by Stephen Bosustow's son, Tee. During my research trip to the U.S. (May–July 2014), I visited Tee Bosustow in Burbank, California. His apartment was full of boxes piled up and just waiting to be opened. He was in the process of donating all the materials that his father had stored during his life to the Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, in Beverly Hills for the benefit of future researchers. I remember how gentle Tee was, as he opened his father's boxes in my presence. We traveled back in time to the days when UPA cartoons drew crowds to LA and NYC movie theaters, UPA artists gave full rein to their creativity and the animation studio was booming. We found all types of memorabilia: UPA publicity documents, sketches, cels, photographs, interoffice memos, financial statements. Among the many artifacts were handwritten and typewritten notes compiled by Stephen Bosustow, several of his appointment books starting from 1944 and even detailed drawn UPA timelines, copies of which can be found in the Appendix. In his later years, after UPA was just a memory, Stephen Bosustow had the idea of writing a book about his experience as an executive producer in the animation business. Whenever he could, and despite the cancer that was consuming him, he wrote. Stephen Bosustow's personal memories as well as the precious UPA materials he left behind are the most relevant primary sources for this work. I am deeply grateful to Tee Bosustow for his generosity, his willingness to preserve UPA items and documents and his devotion to showing UPA animated cartoons to young

generations. At the time of this writing (March 2018), Tee is working on an animated documentary about UPA, a project he started several years ago.

***

The term *animated cinema*, used to address animated films, mainly refers to hand-drawn animated cartoons when not otherwise specified.

The reader is encouraged to watch the UPA animated films referred to in this book as accompaniment to the text.

Author

Cinzia Bottini received her Ph.D. from the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore (2016). She graduated in Philosophy (2004) and earned a Master's degree in Philosophical Studies with an emphasis on fine art and cinema from the University of Milan (2010). She has worked as a journalist for radio, magazine, and television, and she has written about the history and theory of animation for the following journals and books: *ITINERA—Rivista di Filosofia e di Teoria delle Arti*, *Animation—A World History* by Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Animation Studies Online Journal*, and *Cabiria—Studi di Cinema*.

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Introduction

1. "ALMOST TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE"

The animated films produced by United Productions of America (UPA) from 1943 to 1959 marked a turning point in the history of animation. When *Gerald McBoing Boing*[1] premiered in 1951, film critic Arthur Knight welcomed it as the new *Three Little Pigs*.[2] Walt Disney Company's *Three Little Pigs* (1933) had been a milestone for character animation primarily in the U.S., but also internationally: it was one of the first color short films in the *Silly Symphony* series produced by Disney, featuring three anthropomorphic pigs and one wolf animated according to the principles of Disney's "realism."[3] It appeared five years after *Steamboat Willie*,[4] the first fully synchronized sound cartoon, released by Disney in black and white in 1928 and marking the debut of Mickey Mouse and Minnie.[5]

During the 1930s, Mickey Mouse's popularity reached its apex,[6] and by the 1940s, Disney had become a well-established production company in the U.S., especially after the release of its first animated feature film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.[7] From this moment on, more animated feature films would follow, thus confirming Disney as the leading animation company in the U.S. market. Due to its success and popularity, Disney became *the* studio, the point of reference at home and abroad. Disney's "realism" became the standard formula in animation. Early in the *Silly Symphony* series, this was based on the concept of "plausible impossibility": characters are animals that act like human beings and behave according to their specific personality (impossibility) and according to the situations they are placed in and the difficulties they face (plausible).[8] Disney's "realism" was further developed with the adoption of the multiplane camera in 1937, a device that provides the illusion of depth. It is composed of seven layers of artwork shot under a vertical and movable camera. The final result is sequences in which characters are animated

on a three-dimensional background. A quite effective example of the use of the multiplane camera is *Bambi*,[9] in which the little deer is set before a deep three-dimensional forest and subsequently animated.

When UPA animated films appeared in theaters,[10] film critics enthusiastically admired their innovative audiovisual style. Something new was happening in U.S. animation. The public and critics were mesmerized. The comparison inevitably was to Disney: the small studio dared to challenge Disney's production patterns by proposing animated cartoons that departed from Disney's increasing naturalism and favored instead a stylized approach in the layouts, the animation and the sound effects. In 1952, Arthur Knight praised UPA artists for their ability to express the basis of animation, which consists of departing "from pure representation into pure imagination."[11] Bosley Crowther saw in UPA animated shorts an "introduction of maturity and sophistication into the cartoon,"[12] while George Seldes enthusiastically affirmed that:

> [T]he best way to identify the quality of their product is to say that every time you see one of their animated cartoons you are likely to recapture the sensation you had when you first saw Steamboat Willie, the early Silly Symphonies, The Band Concert—the feeling that something new and wonderful has happened, something almost too good to be true.[13]

Accolades and praise echoed also from Europe: as early as 1951, an article lauding *Gerald McBoing Boing* and the accomplishments of Mr. Bosustow's team[14] was published in the French *Cahiers du Cinéma*.[15]

Two animated characters are most associated with the UPA studio: Gerald of *Gerald McBoing Boing* and the nearsighted Mr. Magoo. Little Gerald appeared for the first time in theaters in 1951 and allowed the studio to break into the animation industry with something highly original in terms of both story and audiovisual style. Mr. Magoo, featured for the first time in 1949, in the animated cartoon *The Ragtime Bear*,[16] consolidated UPA's reputation as a creative and innovative animation studio. In the following decade, Mr. Magoo was employed in 53 animated short subjects and one feature film. The character was so successful that he arguably became as popular in the 1950s as Mickey Mouse was in the 1930s.

Stylistically, UPA excelled in the one-shot animated cartoons belonging to the *Jolly Frolics* series, whose production commenced after the signing

of the Columbia agreement. The first film produced was *Robin Hoodlum*.[17] Another 37 animated cartoons followed. Some of these one-shot cartoons brought fame and glory to UPA and can be considered UPA masterpieces, such us the aforementioned *Gerald McBoing Boing*, *Rooty Toot*,[18] *The Unicorn in the Garden*,[19] *The Tell-Tale Heart*[20] and *Fudget's Budget*.[21]

Why were UPA films so successful? Certainly, it was a matter of style, but it was also a matter of story. If UPA animated films were "on the road to revolutionizing the cartoon world,"[22] the reason lies in the "marriage of form *and* content."[23] Every UPA animated cartoon tells a story that is expressed in a unique audiovisual style, and the audiovisual style was developed by UPA artists according to the subject matter; in other words, the style fits the story. This might seem obvious today, but it was not so in the 1940s when the U.S. animation market consisted principally of Warner Bros., Disney and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) films, three companies whose trademarks were based on styles—three very different audiovisual styles—that were applied and repeated in every animated films as consolidated formulas. Hence, what came to be distinctive of UPA animated films was this bond between form and content. In Leonard Maltin's opinion, UPA's assets were the visual style, the story selection and the treatment of it,[24] while Charles Solomon states that all UPA films had a different graphic style yet shared three characteristic elements: "unconventional stories, often with modern settings, contemporary graphics and a more stylized approach to the animation itself."[25]

UPA unconventional stories range from a boy who cannot speak words but utters only sounds (*Gerald McBoing Boing*) to a popular ballad centering on the theme of infidelity and murder (*Rooty Toot Toot*) up to the economic difficulties of a family that struggles with its monthly resources (*Fudget's Budget*). And, these are but a few examples. At UPA, the content of the shorts came from heterogeneous sources: almost everyone could contribute to the production of a cartoon by proposing a story or suggesting ideas for visual or sound developments.[26] It is known, for example, that *Gerald McBoing Boing* is based on a story originally written by Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss) and adapted by UPA story men Bill Scott and Phil Eastman, or that *Madeline*,[27] based on the namesake fable written by Ludwig Bemelmans, was suggested for production by executive producer Stephen Bosustow, who had read the book and found the story interesting.[28] *Madeline* was not the only animated cartoon based on an already published story. Overall, UPA artists favored stories that came

from literature and best expressed themselves in those animated cartoon adaptations. This led to a revolutionary shift in U.S. animation: for virtually the first time, UPA cartoons featured human beings as protagonists instead of anthropomorphic pigs and bunnies. This choice had a twofold outcome. First, UPA animated shorts proposed themes that were closer to everyday life and personal and familial issues than were Warner Bros.' or MGM's animated cartoons, which were mostly based on chases and gags in the vaudevillian tradition, or Disney's animated feature films, which brought the spectator into an imaginary realm of beautiful and innocent princesses, jealous queens and handsome princes. Second, since every story was different, and stories were the subjects to start with, it came as a natural consequence that the styles were developed around the story and that every film had its unique audiovisual treatment.

In other words, UPA films were truer to life. The public could empathize with the themes presented and sometimes even identify with some of the problems proposed. As much as the subject matter was innovative for U.S. animation, the audiovisual styles developed could not be anything but original. This "revolutionary" approach in U.S. animation did not happen by chance but rather evolved as a natural consequence of the historical, sociological and cultural setting of the U.S. in the 1940s and 1950s.

2. UPA IN HISTORY AND THE HISTORY OF UPA

In the late 1930s, the major American animation studios were facing a novelty: the rise of labor unions. With the exception of top animators, the bulk of the animation workforce—from inkers, painters, and background artists up to assistant animators—received low salaries. At Disney, for example, differences between the artists were remarkably stark: a top animator like Art Babbitt or Vladimir "Bill" Tytla earned $300 a week, while an inker or a painter earned $18 per week.[29] The Disney strike of 1941 is considered the event that "changed the world of animation forever."[30] It also paved the way for the foundation of UPA. Protests had taken place during the release periods of animated feature films: *Fantasia*[31] and *Pinocchio*[32] were released in 1940; *Dumbo*,[33] in 1941; and *Bambi*, in 1942. Considering himself a good employer, Walt Disney felt betrayed by those who were opposing him. The actual strike lasted five months.[34] Toward the end of it, Walt left the country for South America, embracing the "Good Neighbor Program,"[35] and left his brother Roy to settle the situation. Just a few weeks after his return in October 1941, a different scenario would

unfold: the attack on Pearl Harbor, the declaration of war on Japan and the war effort.

World War II had a significant impact on the animation industry and forced a stylistic change. From 1942 on, about half of the cartoons produced were made as war propaganda and to train soldiers, sea captains and flight commanders.[36] Many motion-picture branches were set up, such as the First Motion Picture Unit (FMPU), the Marine Corps Film Unit, the Navy Photographic Unit and the Army Signal Corps, among others.[37] When the Disney strike was over, many of the artists who had taken part in it ended up stationed at the FMPU, the film production unit of the U.S. Army. This proved to be a unique and productive lesson since artists were forced by economic restrictions to experiment with the graphics: characters and backgrounds became stylized, as well as the animation. Others spread out to different animation studios such as MGM, Leon Schlesinger, Walter Lantz and Screen Gems,[38] where they also designed more stylized characters and backgrounds and tried a more stylized way of animating the characters.[39]

By the end of World War II, a new American society was born from the ashes of the war. Faith in the future and optimism described the early postwar period, but toward the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, national and international settings were characterized by a certain degree of instability. Although the U.S. economy was prosperous, the 1950s were affected by mistrust, suspicion and uncertainty that amounted to paranoia, fear, hysteria and to some extent a general national neurosis. The patriarchal family of the 1950s, shaped from preexisting historical and sociological conditions, sought stability inside the walls of a secure suburban house.[40]

It is in this framework that UPA was born. In 1943, Stephen Bosustow, Zachary Schwartz and David Hilberman, three of those rebels who had picketed during the Disney strike, founded Industrial Films and Poster Service. The company was renamed United Productions of America in 1945. With the Columbia agreement (1948), UPA entered the entertainment business and started production of animated shorts that were intended for theatrical distribution. The studio flourished during the first half of the 1950s. The "Cold War," a term in use since at least 1947,[41] had repercussions on the existence and the evolution of the small animation studio and also on the contents and especially the satirical verve of its films. When the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) turned its attention toward the small animation studio, at least eight artists

were forced to leave in 1952.[42] Among them were designer-director John Hubley and writers Phil Eastman and Bill Scott, three people whose artistic contribution had been fundamental in early UPA productions. After 1956 UPA began its artistic decline, and in 1960 the company was sold by its executive producer, Stephen Bosustow.

Many were the directors who worked at UPA, and each of them brought a different artistic sensitivity and aesthetic. After concluding his masterpiece, *Rooty Toot Toot*, John Hubley left the studio, an event that allowed animator Robert (Bobe) Cannon to rise to prominence and become the most prolific director in the company. Indeed, some of Cannon's films were the biggest contributors to defining UPA's revolutionary attitude toward animation, films such as *Willie the Kid*,[43] *Madeline*, *Christopher Crumpet*,[44] *Fudget's Budget* and *The Jaywalker*.[45] Bobe Cannon's creativity had already reached great heights with *Gerald McBoing Boing* (1951), a quintessential UPA film awarded with an Oscar for Best Cartoon, Short Subject[46] in 1950, but the departure of Hubley allowed it to flourish. To be sure, Hubley and Cannon were not the only directors at UPA, although they have been recognized as the most relevant creative forces behind the studio, especially in its initial phase. Other animators and designers had the chance to direct and leave a mark not only in the history of UPA but in the history of animation, such as William T. Hurtz and Ted Parmelee, who directed *The Unicorn in the Garden* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*, respectively. Still other artists expressed their personal directing style in the animated segments of *The Boing-Boing Show*, a 30-minute program commissioned by CBS that premiered in 1956 and whose existence was possible thanks to the rise of television networks during the 1950s.

Another relevant UPA director was Pete Burness, who devoted himself to Mr. Magoo. After Hubley got tired of working on the same character and decided to relinquish the direction of Mr. Magoo theatrical releases to other UPA artists, animator Pete Burness was put in charge of the task.[47] His major achievement was *When Magoo Flew*,[48] the first UPA animated cartoon featuring Mr. Magoo to win an Oscar from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for Best Cartoon, Short Subject, in 1954. Burness was a key figure in ensuring UPA a continuing character designed for an animated series. From an economic perspective, without the Mr. Magoo theatrical releases, whose steady production was imposed by Columbia, UPA would not have had the opportunity

to produce the one-shot animated cartoons that were so aesthetically groundbreaking. On a greater scale, the existence of the studio itself was bound to the Mr. Magoo theatrical releases. Significantly, if Burness had not succeeded in maintaining the popularity of the character, Columbia could have feasibly ended the distribution deal long before it was actually terminated (1958), which would have resulted in such animated cartoons as *Christopher Crumpet*, *The Unicorn in the Garden*, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *Fudget's Budget* and *The Jaywalker* never having been produced.[49]

Every cultural expression, as is, for example, an animated film, mirrors the historical period in which it is produced. UPA animated shorts encapsulate the spirit of the 1940s and 1950s and can be interpreted as "cultural artifacts" of this transitional historical period. What was happening in the arts affected the way UPA films were designed and animated, and determined the birth of UPA's new attitude toward animation. Contributions came from almost every field of art, and UPA was part of a major stylistic change.

UPA artists were extremely receptive to contemporary artistic expressions. They looked for stories with subject matter intended for adults and not only children thus addressing more controversial issues, but they also incorporated Modern[50] stylistic tendencies of the historical period: from painting to jazz music to graphic design. The reconfiguration of these Modern expressions in the service of animation led to a new way of interpreting animation as an art form. UPA thus marked the transition toward Modern animation in the U.S.

The UPA aesthetic "revolution" was carried out by artists who came from the most traditional training in animation, which at the time meant only one studio: Disney. After they left Disney, those who were destined to become future UPA artists were aware that Disney had reached a stylistic apex in animated cinema, especially in terms of the visual effects achievements that allowed a high degree of photo-realism. Experimentation, therefore, could only follow a course outside the Disney stylistic domain, directing it toward developing a completely new approach to the animation medium. Who were these people?

3. UPA STUDIO AND ITS PEOPLE

UPA artists were among the most skilled designers, animators and story writers of their time. Some of them, such as Zachary Schwartz, David Hilberman, Art Babbitt, John Hubley, Stephen Bosustow and Bill

Melendez came from the Disney studio and were eager to prove themselves in new artistic adventures. When Industrial Films and Poster Service was founded, many of the renegades who had participated in the Disney strike and were consequently excluded from the company enthusiastically joined what would later become UPA.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, a significant number of talented people concentrated at UPA. These artists included animators and directors Bobe Cannon, Art Babbitt, Pete Burness and Rudy Larriva; designers and directors John Hubley and Ted Parmelee; storyboard artist William T. Hurtz; story writers Phil Eastman and Bill Scott; animators Bill Melendez, Alan Zaslove, Willis Pyle and Pat Matthews; colorists Herbert Klynn, Bob McIntosh and Jules Engel; sound designer Joe Siracusa; and background artist Paul Julian. Some of them had already exhibited as independent painters,[51] had had their training at the Leon Schlesinger studio[52] or Disney, or had already worked in professional contexts, such as sound designer Joe Siracusa, who had collaborated with musician Spike Jones.[53] All of them brought to UPA their experience and skills, thus making the studio a highly creative place.

These artists were aware of those features that characterized American animation up to that moment and sensed the possibility of experimenting and transforming them into something different and new. Designer John Hubley, who wrote a paper in collaboration with Zachary Schwartz titled "Animation Learns a New Language" in 1946,[54] especially wanted to depart from the traditional representation of pigs and bunnies in animation and develop a new type of audiovisual language that could express meaningful stories. By turning to Modern artistic expressions for inspiration, UPA artists purposefully sought to elevate animation from craft to art form.

UPA animated shorts, especially the theatrical releases, were intended as works of art. Still, UPA animated shorts were produced for the market, thereby fulfilling economic and commercial needs of the entertainment industry. If the one-shot animated cartoons belonging to the *Jolly Frolics* series allowed the artists to experiment with different styles, it was the Mr. Magoo series that granted a steady continuity in the production. Cartoons cannot be sold on an individual basis,[55] and Columbia Pictures clearly demanded animated shorts that featured the nearsighted character instead of the more creative, less profitable one-shot animated cartoons.[56] The conditions were dictated by the distribution company, which bore

significant weight in creative decisions, such as who could be hired by executive producer Stephen Bosustow and what type of cartoons could be made. In 1953, for example, Columbia Pictures stated in the renewal of the agreement that UPA artists had to seek approval from Columbia for any non-Magoo subjects.[57] The studio could only adjust to this decision. The entire UPA filmic production can be interpreted as an attempt at finding a compromise between highly artistic aspirations and economic needs dictated by the market.

In fact, although its artists and even its executive producer, Stephen Bosustow, had high artistic ambitions, UPA was a for-profit organization. In order to compete in the animation industry, the studio diversified its production into industrial, educational and commercial cartoons, aside from the animated shorts made for theatrical release. The studio indeed survived a difficult early stage by focusing solely on the production of industrial films. Commercials came a bit later, in 1947, when UPA's first animated TV commercial was produced for Southern Select Beer of Galveston.[58] In 1950, the company opened a branch in New York City, and in 1956, another in London, with the intention of expanding in the advertising industry. UPA commercials were so successful that between 1951 and 1954 they received awards at least seven times from the New York Art Directors Club, one time from the Los Angeles Art Directors Club, and another time from the Art Directors Club of Chicago.[59] They also had a relevant impact on the history of animated commercials not only in the U.S. but internationally. A comprehensive study of UPA animated commercials and their international influence is yet to be conducted. It would shed light on a trend that occurred internationally during the 1950s and 1960s: animated TV commercials expressed a common tendency toward a minimalist approach in animation that owed much to UPA innovations. It is the opinion of the author that UPA anticipated this trend and effectively synthesized it.

In the 1950s, many U.S. animation studios making TV commercials were using stylized layouts and simplified animation.[60] UPA was one of them, but the only one lucky enough to also produce theatrical releases. In 1956, the studio ventured into TV programming with *The Boing-Boing Show*, the first animated program specially made for network television. UPA's innovative attitude toward animation also applied to the way commercials and *The Boing-Boing Show* were made, thus placing UPA at the cutting edge in every production.