

MoMA EXHIBITION EXPLORES NEW YORK'S ANIMATION HISTORY THROUGH MORE THAN 200 WORKS FROM THE MUSEUM'S FILM COLLECTION

It's Alive! A Century of Animation from the Collection Opens August 1, 2026

NEW YORK, May 28, 2026 — The Museum of Modern Art announces *It's Alive! A Century of Animation from the Collection*, an expansive exhibition featuring the work that more than 35 artists and filmmakers—working largely in New York—produced in the 100 years prior to digital technology's transformation of the medium. Opening August 1, 2026, the exhibition will bring together over 200 pieces of production art and films from the Museum's collection created between 1908 and 2020 by such artists as Jane Aaron, John Canemaker, Sally Cruikshank, Tissa David, Jerome Hill, Candy Kugel, Emily and Faith Hubley, David Ehrlich, George Griffin, Jeff Scher, and Michael Sporn. A theatrical retrospective of animated shorts and features, including work by exhibited artists and other animators represented in the Museum's collection, will coincide with the exhibition, with details to be announced. *It's Alive! A Century of Animation from the Collection* is organized by Ron Magliozzi, Curator, Francisco Valente, Curatorial Associate, Katie Trainor, Senior Collections Manager, and Cara Shatzman, Collections Specialist, Department of Film, with thanks to the Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Center's Seth Mitter, Alma Macbride, and Joseph Shepherd.

"Animation has been an immensely popular medium since the birth of motion pictures. At MoMA, its creative evolution has been marked by more than a hundred film programs, and the acquisition of animated works by studios and independent filmmakers alike," said Magliozzi. "At its core, *It's Alive* celebrates the roots of animation in New York and demonstrates how the city remained a hub for innovative work impacting pop culture. *It's Alive* is a testament to collection initiatives that seek to document moviemaking practices and cinema culture in New York and a generation of local artists whose careers advanced the medium as a form of self-expression."

The exhibition primarily focuses on individual animation artists, highlighting their distinctive work and shared practices. It will open with black-and-white cartoon icons from the silent film era—Otto Messmer's Felix the Cat, Dave Fleischer's Koko the Clown, and Winsor McCay's Gertie the Dinosaur—demonstrating the role of character-based animation in establishing the medium's popularity. In contrast, works by Isadore Sparber, Mary Beams, Kathy Rose, Tissa David, and David Ehrlich will illustrate how black-and-white line drawing remained a foundational expressive aesthetic throughout the pre-digital period. Viewers will experience the addition of color as a standard in the 1930s and the modernization of animation design led by featured animator John Hubley in the 1950s. Examples of commissioned work for Public Television's *Sesame Street* and rare material from MTV's "I Want My MTV" spots—including Cyndi Lauper, David Bowie, Lionel Richie, Madonna, Hall and Oates, and Culture Club—will also be displayed. Other exhibition highlights from the Museum's collection include works by Lotte Reiniger, Len Lye, Emile Cohl, Hans Richter, Oscar Grillo, Lou and Morey Bunin, and Robert Brotherton, as well as the premiere installation of Philip Stapp's scroll *Interstices, a Silent Fugue* (1992), which finds a "distant source of the animated film" within the traditional Chinese scroll.

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PRESS CONTACTS:

Sara Beth Walsh, sarabeth_walsh@moma.org
Hannah Palacios, hannah_palacios@moma.org
Press Office, pressoffice@moma.org

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