

It's Alive! A Century of Animation from the Collection

Since the birth of motion pictures, animation has been an immensely popular medium. At the Museum, its creative evolution has been marked by more than a hundred programs and acquisitions of animated works by studios and independent filmmakers alike. Drawing from the collection, *It's Alive!* celebrates the roots of animation in New York and a generation of local artists who, working in the 1970s–1990s, advanced the medium as a form of self-expression.

Felix the Cat, Koko the Clown, and Gertie the Dinosaur, enduring cartoon icons of the silent era (1890s–1920s), prove how significant character-based animation was to establishing the medium. The hand-drawn practices of their creators, Otto Messmer, Dave Fleischer, and Winsor McCay, were fundamental to the characters' appeal. As is evident in contrasting works on display from later decades—by the artists Isadore Sparber, Mary Beams, Kathy Rose, Tissa David, and David Ehrlich—black-and-white line drawing remained an expressive style through the predigital period.

The addition of color in the 1930s and the modernization of animation design led by John Hubley in the 1950s influenced a number of independent animators who called New York home, including Jane Aaron, John Canemaker, Faith and Emily Hubley, George Griffin, Candy Kugel, Jeff Scher, and Michael Sporn. These animators balanced commissioned projects for the likes of Public Television and MTV with personal filmmaking, forging careers that resonated worldwide. *It's Alive!* is a testament to a rich period of the city's movie-making history and to the diversity of the Museum's animation holdings.

Organized by Ron Magliozzi, Curator, with Francisco Valente, Curatorial Associate; Katie Trainor, Senior Collections Manager; and Cara Shatzman, Collections Specialist, Department of Film. Special thanks to Seth Mitter, Alma MacBride, and Joseph Shepherd, and the Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Center.

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