Beyond Pigs and Bunnies

In their 1946 essay “Animation Learns a New Language,” John Hubley and Zachary Schwartz declared that animation was “no longer the vaudeville world of pigs and bunnies.” They wrote, “We have found that line, shape, color, and symbols in movement can represent the essence of an idea . . . and a suitable form can be found for any idea.”

What followed in the 1950s was an aesthetic approach later known as Cartoon Modern—which liberated animators from the character-based, pictorial realism that had previously dominated the medium under the influence of major Hollywood studios, Walt Disney chief among them. The works on display in this gallery are representative of the different ways filmmakers in the Museum’s collection realized this newfound freedom.