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to label this movement as post-modern, in that it goes beyond modernism in order to attain a simultaneous view of past and present as in a kind of general eclecticism. The defeat of tradition has produced the new path of linguistic experimentation. In this sense everything can be experimented, no holds barred in order to develop a new sensibility (the so-called post-modern sensibility). Old and new authors are using the language of animation as if it were a virgin language, a language without history (or rather with so much history that it cannot supply any further indications). Everyone moves about with an extreme sense of freedom which gives us new aesthetic experiences and communicated a new content. Italian animation went through various stages, all of them ending with a period of crisis, which was negative only on first sight: in fact, it is through the general re-shuffling of options in times of crisis that the Italian animators always discovered new domains of fantasy and inventiveness: this connects up, in a certain sense, with the specific ability of animation to transcend reality by the technical means of motion and re-created images.

MULTICOLORED ICEBERG
by Giannalberto Bendazzi

The image Italian animation has of itself, when compared to its opposite numbers in other countries, is still as always the traditional one: a certain sense of powerlessness. The reasons for the structural and economic weaknesses of Italian production are well-known. We could say that they’re only too well known, that is, always present in the mind of anyone who talks about the subject, describes it, between themselves or to foreigners. For the most part however, foreigners don’t know about these things, since they normally have their own local problems under their noses, problems often no less difficult to resolve than our own.

Foreigners traditionally have a much higher opinion than you would expect, as far as Italian production is concerned. The positive development of recent years (that has begun to make our presence felt in every respect at the big film festivals, at least on a quantitative level) is the stimulus needed by that band of first-division Italian filmmakers to ensure that those so self-deprecating Italians find their proper place among the citizens-elect of the world of cinema animation. It’s when we talk about quantity that the comic note may appear: by means of a simple process of arithmetic, the layman can discover that the annual Italian production is of at least fifty short films per year, taking into consideration that only ten or so of those, among films both in and out of the competition schedule, ever reach the festival screens. It’s normal to pull a wry face, and explain that, no, this isn’t the tip of the iceberg, it’s all of the iceberg, or pretty nearly. The international festivals are always the barometer of quality, obviously. Bozzetto, Gianini & Luzatti, Manuli, Cavandoli, Manfredi and De Mas are the super-graduates of the of Ottawa, Annecy, Zagreb, Varna, Espinho, Hiroshima festivals. They are the film-makers who revel in fame, high esteem, and also a hint of stardom; they’re the ones you’re asked for news about as soon as you set foot in an international setting, and whose influence you can recognise in the style of their foreign colleagues. We were able to see, for example, with a certain vague pride, in the recent “Paradise” of Ishi Patel, a true and proper “tribute” to his master Giulio Gianini (that flying creature that looked like a Thieving Magpie).

Certainly, we can ask ourselves, on the other hand, how much these film-makers may have absorbed from the works of others. But rather than this, it’s more important to underline how the nature of their work is substantially homogeneous with that of the main current of today’s international animation. The works and the tastes of the film-makers of Italy are, in short, perfectly up-to-date, and this ought to be enough to reassure the many who, even in well-informed environments, contract out abroad work that has to be up-to-date. The credit for this goes undoubtedly to the constant haunting of that planetary ghetto that is the world of international animation, of its festivals, of its shows of varying shapes and sizes. Curiously, it usually turns out that those you’re expected to be ready to smash through all the conventions — that is, the young and the very young — in fact have a much more conservative style. It’s rather strange to see some youngsters of twenty or thirty come up with forms, styles and ideas that were judged oppressive and dated twenty or thirty (exactly?) years ago. One the one hand, we have the recovery of the production and style once popular, that’s certain, but on the other hand there’s also a penalty to pay for the relatively false information, for living outside the walls of the ghetto, where the rites of quality animation are officiated over.

In an international perspective, Italian animation emits a sense of optimism. Many distances have been shortened, by comparison with the Sixties and Seventies, and also from the point of view of the industry (the serials), something seems to be heading in the right direction. If there is a sore point these days, it would appear to be a different thing altogether: the equipment. The phenomenon of animation’s going electronic has only skimmed over our country, leaving it decidedly withdrawn with respect to the reality of such extremely
advanced technology as can be found in Japan, Canada, the USA, France and Britain. Let’s not forget that the first film made by computer animation in Italy was “Pinocchio” by Giuseppe Laganà, which arrived in time to inaugurate the Eighties, thus, with respect to more advanced experiments, at least ten years late. No-one has yet filled in any of the gaps created by this lateness, but it isn’t the duty of film-makers alone to do so: it’s also up to the computer graphics institutes, to the buyers of advertising space and, well, why not?, to the government.

ANIMATION AND ADVERTISING
by Pierluigi De Mas

The good reputation of Italian animation today is due to a number of factors: a few artists who are known on an international level, a number of awards won at the most important national and international film festivals, an Italian style which is well respected abroad, a fairly well articulated production which comprises several sectors, from art films to didactic films, TV serials, video clips, television identification sequences, and, finally, a great openness towards research, experimentation and the use of new technologies. The period of crisis, which to some people looks never ending, has been in fact overcome. The best confirmation of its success comes from the advertising world which, although till recently failed to acknowledge its role, is ready nowadays to accept its contribution and effectiveness.

Angelo Beretta who, together with his partners Paolo Albicocco and Giorgio Forlani runs the Erre Di A 70 advertising film production company, stresses that this is a favourable moment for animation: “Till recent years, animation was chosen by advertising agencies only when the budgets did not allow the production of live action films. Today, since its very inception, an idea for a commercial is very often meant for production as an animated film: this is an actual strategic choice by the agency itself. And it is the improvement of the qualitative level of animated films that made it possible”. Michel Fuzelier who produces animated films together with his partner Walter Barazzuti (Quick Sand is the name of their production firm) says: “Few years ago, there has been a general re-awakening of interest for illustration, which has affected advertising agencies by then weary of the prevailing photographic style. Such style, although very high level, had affected the production of commercials in such a way that they appeared to be all alike. Illustration and cartoons, which are actually illustration in motion, have enabled agencies to vary their strategy and to add a personal touch to their campaigns: and this is a growing trend”.

What about the agencies? Alberto Cremona has recently opened an agency of the same name. In the last few years, most of his commercials were using animation; therefore, he has a definite liking for this technique: “I am very positive about animation. On the other hand, the most developed markets provide a much greater space for animation than Italy does. Animation allows us to show magical, impossible things at a reduced cost”. Is it in any way possible that reduced cost stands for second-best solution? Anna Maria Testa, who with Pella and Bossi set up an agency of the same name, denies it vehemently: “It is not second-best, but an alternative solution which allows us to perform within the limits of smaller budgets. It’s a different thing! A second-best solution would mean something like shooting on location in Rimini instead of in the Seychelles. Instead, the Seychelles location is too expensive, we simply change the film style. An excellent animation film, on an average, costs a bit less than a live action film. It is an obvious thing to say, but it is true: animation allows you to show something which would be very difficult and expensive to do with live action”. It is important to get to know the point of view of the customer.

Doctor Flavio Caggiala, the advertising man for Nestlé Italiana Spa, says: “The economic aspect of animation is certainly interesting to us; but I do not believe it is fair to compare it with other production techniques”. Besides the economic aspect, animation shows other advantages with respect to alternative techniques. Michel Fuzelier: “Animation is definitely more advantageous than other techniques in that it allows for continuous control through all phases of the production. The agency has the actual possibility of interacting with the artist from the storyboard through to the study of characters, from the animation pencil-test to the designing of sets, and therefore of channeling, the production of the film as it likes. Thanks to this continuous control, the agency finds that animation is the safest way to work because it leaves no room for surprises when it is completed”. Annamaria Testa: “If we decide to use animation, it is because we know that we want to obtain certain effects and therefore our storyboard is designed to take these effects into consideration from the outset as well as specific solution. What we are keenly interested in is the technical ability of the artist in the design stage, namely his style, the choice of technical tricks, whatever can enrich the final product”. Angelo Beretta: “The idea always originates within the agency itself. Later on, we shape it together with the animator. This is the line of