

# NEH Application Cover Sheet (TR-261087)

## Media Projects Production

### PROJECT DIRECTOR

---

Ms. Kathryn Pierce Dietz  
Executive Producer and Project Director  
338 Rosemary Street  
Needham, MA 02494-3257  
USA

**E-mail:** dietz.kathryn@gmail.com  
**Phone:** 781-956-2212  
**Fax:**

**Field of expertise:** Philosophy, General

### INSTITUTION

---

Filmmakers Collaborative, Inc.  
Melrose, MA 02176-3933

### APPLICATION INFORMATION

---

**Title:** *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story*

**Grant period:** From 2018-09-03 to 2019-04-19

**Project field(s):** U.S. History; Film History and Criticism; Media Studies

**Description of project:** Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story is a 60-minute film about a family of artists and inventors who revolutionized animation and created some of the funniest and most irreverent cartoon characters of all time. They began working in the early 1900s, at the same time as Walt Disney, but while Disney went on to become a household name, the Fleischers are barely remembered. Our film will change this, introducing a wide national audience to a family of brothers – Max, Dave, Lou, Joe, and Charlie – who created Fleischer Studios and a roster of animated characters who reflected the rough and tumble sensibilities of their own Jewish immigrant neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. “The Fleischer story involves the glory of American Jazz culture, union brawls on Broadway, gangsters, sex, and southern segregation,” says advisor Tom Sito. Advisor Jerry Beck adds, “It is a story of rags to riches – and then back to rags – leaving a legacy of iconic cinema and evergreen entertainment.”

### BUDGET

---

<b>Outright Request</b>	600,000.00	<b>Cost Sharing</b>	90,000.00
<b>Matching Request</b>	0.00	<b>Total Budget</b>	690,000.00
<b>Total NEH</b>	600,000.00		

### GRANT ADMINISTRATOR

---

Ms. Laura Azevedo  
6 Eastman Place  
Melrose, MA 02176-3933  
USA

**E-mail:** laura@filmmakerscollab.org  
**Phone:** 781-662-1102  
**Fax:** 781-662-1140

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

### Page

1	<b>NARRATIVE</b>
1	A. Nature of the Request
1	B. Program Synopsis
3	C. Humanities Content
3	1. Yiddishkayt and the Fleischer Era
4	2. Gender & Feminism in Fleischer Animations
6	3. Race in Early Animations
7	4. From Rotoscope to CG: Invention & Realism in Animation
9	5. Creating an Industry: The Early Cartoon Business
10	D. Creative Approach
10	E. Audience and Distribution
11	F. Project Evaluation
11	G. Rights and Permissions
12	H. Humanities Advisors
14	I. Media Team (14)
15	J. Progress
15	K. Work Plan
16	L. Fundraising Plan
17	M. Organizational Profile
17	N. List of Collections to be Used
19	O. Preliminary Interviews
20	P. User-generated Content
21	<b>SCRIPT</b>
24	Act I: Inventing an Industry
30	Act II: Golden Age
37	Act III: Growing Pains
44	Act IV: No Greater Hatred Than Brotherly Love
49	<b>IMAGES</b>
55	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>
57	<b>RESUMES AND LETTERS OF COMMITMENT</b>
	Media Team
	Humanities Advisors
98	<b>DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE</b>
99	<b>BUDGET</b>

## ABSTRACT

---

*Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story* is a 60-minute film about a family of artists and inventors who revolutionized animation and created some of the funniest and most irreverent cartoon characters of all time. They began working in the early 1900s, at the same time as Walt Disney, but while Disney went on to become a household name, the Fleischers are barely remembered. Our film will change this, introducing a wide national audience to a family of brothers – Max, Dave, Lou, Joe, and Charlie – who created Fleischer Studios and a roster of animated characters who reflected the rough and tumble sensibilities of their own Jewish immigrant neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. “The Fleischer story involves the glory of American Jazz culture, union brawls on Broadway, gangsters, sex, and southern segregation,” says advisor Tom Sito; advisor Jerry Beck adds, “It is a story of rags to riches – and then back to rags – leaving a legacy of iconic cinema and evergreen entertainment.”

## NARRATIVE

---

### A. Nature of the Request

This is a request for \$600,000 in production funding for *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story*, a 60-minute documentary about a family of artists and inventors who revolutionized animation and created some of the funniest and most irreverent cartoon characters of all time. They began working in the early 1900s, at the same time as Walt Disney, but while Disney went on to become a household name and head of the largest media company in the world, the Fleischers are barely remembered.

*Cartooning America* will change this, introducing a wide national audience to a family of brothers – Max, Dave, Lou, Joe, and Charlie – who created Fleischer Studios and a roster of animated characters who reflected the rough and tumble sensibilities of their own Jewish immigrant neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. As advisor Tom Sito writes in his letter of commitment, “The Fleischer story involves the glory of American Jazz culture in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, technological innovation, union brawls and fistfights on Broadway, gangsters, sex, and southern segregation. It is also the story of a family torn apart by ambition and infidelity, where brothers ultimately betrayed one another. It is high time this fascinating story is told.”

The intersection of Jewish themes and American culture is a continuing interest of the film’s director, Asaf Galay, as seen in his most recent films, *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* and *The Hebrew Superhero*, and in his Tel Aviv Diaspora museum exhibits on Leonard Cohen, Bob Dylan, and Jewish humor. The film’s producer, Helen Dobrowski, co-produced *Walt Disney*, the 4-hour series by Sarah Colt Productions that was funded by the NEH and premiered on the PBS *American Experience* series in 2015.

With an NEH development grant, we have completed most content and archival research and are ready to begin production of a film that will take us through a quarter century with the Fleischers, beginning with their earliest days as innovators of the new animation industry, and ending with their studio’s sudden and surprising demise in 1942.

### B. Program Synopsis

In his bar mitzvah speech delivered in 1897 and preserved in handwritten notes by a brother, Max Fleischer said, “The most important thing in life is ... animation.” He may have been referring to the fact that he liked activity more than idleness; he was a tinkerer and inventor from a family of tinkerers and inventors. He may have been referencing the “animated” images of Edison’s movies that he loved. But people who knew him took it as prophetic, considering how his life unfolded.

In 1919 Max and Dave Fleischer opened Inkwell Studios in New York City, and began churning out episodes of a new cartoon series, *Out of the Inkwell*, featuring KoKo the Clown. KoKo was based on films that Max shot of Dave, “rotoscoped” into a cartoon figure. The Rotoscope was an invention that Max designed and his brother Joe built, with help from Dave. It enabled them to record a human figure in motion on film, and project the film frame by frame onto a sheet of frosted glass on an animation table, where it could be traced and adapted into a cartoon figure who moved more naturally than had ever before been possible in animation. Their KoKo the Clown cartoons were a hit. In each episode Max appeared as a live-action character, dipping his pen into the inkwell and creating KoKo, who would run off and have wild adventures until he was tucked back into the inkwell.

In the early years, the whole family was involved: Joe was the mechanical whiz who built what others designed, and maintained the cameras and equipment. Lou was an accomplished pianist and was put in charge of music. Charlie was an electrical contractor who helped out as needed. Their sister Ethel played the piano that accompanied the silent movies, and even their mother often helped with the drawing. But it

was Max and Dave who ran the show, with Max the executive in charge of production and Dave the director in charge of stories.

There was no animation industry when they began; it was invented on the fly. The Fleischers were first to use synchronized sound, featuring it in *My Ole Kentucky Home*, with a talking dog that invited the audience to follow a bouncing ball and sing along. They made popular science films in addition to their *Inkwell* series and a *Song Car-Tunes* series that featured the bouncing ball sing-alongs, a precursor to karaoke. After a short stint running their own distribution company, they signed with the premiere movie distributor of the day, Paramount Pictures.

As music came to be fully synchronized with picture in the 1930s, they hired jazz legends Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, and Don Redman to sing on their tracks, introducing jazz to audiences across America for the first time. These jazz cartoons brought in new characters; in a film called *Dizzy Dishes* (1930), Bimbo the dog is about to bring food to a hungry gorilla when he spots someone performing on stage and falls in love. It is Betty Boop, initially half-dog and half-woman. An independent New Yorker who was sexy and exotic, Betty Boop soon became the most popular Fleischer star.

In 1934 the Fleischers licensed the character of Popeye the Sailor Man from E.C. Segar's comic strip, pairing him with a rubbery and devoted girlfriend, Olive Oyl. The voice actors who played them, Jack Mercer and Mae Questel, often ad-libbed dialogue in the recording, resulting in films with an easy-going, improvisational quality that contributed to their appeal. *Popeye* became the most popular series the studio ever produced, surpassing even Disney's *Mickey Mouse* as America's favorite cartoon.

The artist who drew Betty Boop, Grim Natwick, was lured West to the Walt Disney Studio to work on Disney's ambitious new feature animation, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. When *Snow White* was released in 1938, it was a smash hit, grossing \$7.8 million – or \$130 million in today's money – proving that a full-length cartoon could sustain audience interest.

But trouble was brewing at the Fleischers' New York studio. In the spring of 1937, employees staged a strike to protest the long hours, low pay, and lack of benefits that were typical in the industry. Max was distraught; his workers, he thought, were part of his extended family. The strike dragged on for six months. When it ended, Max proposed moving the studio to Miami, Florida – a non-union state where land was cheap, and where he, Dave, and Lou all had winter homes. To sweeten the deal, he offered to pay relocation costs for all of his workers, their families, and their close relatives.

Paramount paid for this, on top of covering the cost of a new complex of buildings in Miami, and a \$2 million loan to make the studio's first feature, *Gulliver's Travels*. As collateral, Paramount extracted a promise that it would get all of the Fleischer's finished cartoons if anything went wrong.

For years, the studio had been losing top talent to Walt Disney, Warner Bros., and Walter Lantz, but with the move to Florida they lost some of their lower level talent, too. Film negatives had to be shipped to New York for processing, since there were no labs in Miami. Dave and Max began to fight about creative control and personal style, and eventually they stopped speaking. It left their employees factionalized and demoralized, and the other brothers were helpless to do anything. *Gulliver* went over budget, and when it premiered in 1939, it was compared unfavorably to Disney's *Snow White*. The premiere timing was also bad, as war swept through Europe and Japan, two major markets for American cartoons. All of the studios felt the pinch, but the Fleischers had few options because of their financial arrangements with Paramount.

In 1941, Paramount took over the studio, relegating Max and Dave to employees. The studio continued to make their popular *Popeye* cartoons, and in 1941 they launched a new *Superman* series, based on the

character leased from Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. They also premiered their second feature that year, *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*. But it was released just after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and was barely seen.

The studio was in crisis, and its entire library of cartoons was in jeopardy. Paramount asked for letters of resignation from Max and Dave, and by 1942, all of the assets of the Fleischer Studios were absorbed into a new company, Famous Studios, where Max's son-in-law, Seymour Kneitel, worked.

Perhaps out of decency – Seymour had a heart condition and his two sons both had polio – Max did not fight Paramount, but found work in with a friend from his early years in animation, Jamison (Jam) Handy. Dave took a job with Paramount's rival, Columbia, before moving to Universal. Lou became a lens grinder; Joe stayed with Famous Studio in their machine shop; Charlie, the only brother to remain in Florida, fell off of a ladder in 1956 and died.

Twelve years after the studio closed, Walt Disney invited Max's son Richard Fleischer to direct his newest film, *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Richard agreed on the condition that he first get his father's approval. Not only did Max approve; he also attended a luncheon with Walt at his studio in Burbank, reuniting with many former Fleischer animators now in Disney's employ. *20,000 Leagues* was a huge commercial success – as well as the first and only merging of the Fleischer and Disney genius.

### **C. Humanities Content**

*Cartooning America* is the story five Jewish brothers who pioneered a popular new art form, creating characters rooted in the urban melting pot of New York at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While it begins 100 years ago, it is relevant today as Americans continue to debate the role of immigrants and people from big cities in shaping our national culture and values. It also sheds light on the powerful cross-currents transforming America in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, in gender and race relations, and in the fields of entertainment and industry.

#### **1. Yiddishkayt and the Fleischer Era**

The Fleischer cartoons reflected the *gestalt* of the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn and the Lower East Side of Manhattan where the Fleischers grew up. According to Eddy Portnoy of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, "Brownsville was notorious as the most Yiddish neighborhood in the city, even more so than the Lower East Side. So, they definitely knew Yiddish." Advisor Tom Sito agrees, "They probably spoke Yiddish more than they spoke English."

As such, the Fleischer story helps us understand the theme of Yiddishkayt, or the culture of the first generation of Jewish Eastern European immigrants to the United States. Mostly lower middle class or working class and urban, these Jews played a crucial role in the development of American popular culture. "It's because they were condensed within Greater New York at a moment when that culture was developing as a vast, creative business venture," advisor Paul Buhle explains. "It's because Jews had special opportunities inside of entertainment but relatively few outside. It's because of their particular Euro-American preparation to leap across cultural lines. And it's because of a particular audience taste for the uproarious, 'improper,' satirical view of society from the standpoint of the Outsider."

Historian Barbara Mann compares the Fleischers with well-known figures in other popular culture genres who shaped American Jewish culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. "Will Eisner did it with the graphic novel. Woody Allen did it with films, Philip Roth in his books, and Lenny Bruce in his stand-up routines. They spoke out of a Jewish idiom, to a wider audience. One could say that the Fleischer brothers and their work anticipated, in some fashion, these postwar Jewish artists, especially for their idiosyncratic and genre-bending artistic vision."

Advisor Paul Buhle adds, “Jewish culture at that time was known for its openness about sexuality, and its lack of embarrassment about vulgarity. They were outsiders and they acted like it, even using bad manners, and not being embarrassed to make art out of it.”

The Fleischer films presented views of the city life that the brothers knew from the personal experience. Ethnic gags abounded. “The Fleischers spoof urban types drawn from New York’s immigrant neighborhoods in familiar vaudeville stereotypes like the big-nosed, mustachioed Italian, or the gibberish-spouting Chinese,” writes advisor Amy Holberg.

Advisor Mark Langer adds that the Fleischers’ employees represented the melting pot of new immigrants. The studio was located in the heart of Broadway, an area teeming “with speakeasies, grind houses, legitimate theatres and movie palaces. It was the crossroads of the universe – and the films showed it. They are the products of urban America, depicting not only Jews and a Jewish viewpoint, but a multi-vocal view of America.”

The Fleischer cartoons illustrate another condition of being Jewish in America, particularly in New York, at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: exclusion. In one early *Popeye* episode, *Can You Take It?*, Popeye is offered the chance to join a club only if he can hold up to a horrific beating by the other club members. He is beaten to a pulp, and saved only by the magical powers of spinach. “It doesn’t take a lot of interpretation to see in this film both echoes of religious persecution, and the desire for a transforming agent that would give power to a powerless minority,” writes Langer. There is a similar plot in *Bimbo’s Initiation*, a Betty Boop cartoon about a college fraternity hazing.

Fleischer’s very first animated character, KoKo the Clown, was based on a vaudeville performer, Bessie McCoy. “The Ko-Ko stories are very vaudevillian, with Max and KoKo interacting in ways that recall the big two-act vaudeville teams of the day, like Weber and Fields. These acts humanized Jews for the broad public, while also perpetuating Jewish stereotypes,” notes Langer.

Advisor Tom Sito recalls that Boola, the two-headed giant in *Popeye vs Sinbad*, actually speaks a kind of nonsense Yiddish/English. Yiddish phrases are sprinkled into the dialogue of Betty Boop films, possibly due to Mae Questel’s improvisations. “To Yiddish speaking audiences, it was pretty obvious that Betty, while channeling Helen Kane, was also, at least partially, Fanny Brice. In one cartoon, she even sings a Fanny Brice song.”

In her article “Betty Boop: Yiddish Film Star,” Amy Holberg describes how sprinkling Yiddish words and gags into their productions “was a sign of ties to the community, even as the films themselves were aimed at and distributed to a more diverse, mainstream American audience.” For example, in *Dizzy Dishes*, an angry customer screams at the restaurateur, “I want ham!” and is given a ham labeled with the Hebrew letters for *Kosher*.

## **2. Gender & Feminism in Fleischer Animations**

Since the beginning of Hollywood, female movie stars have helped shape popular understanding of feminine identity. In the D.W. Griffith era it was strong women like Mary Pickford and Lillian Gish who dominated the box office, giving way to more transgressive and ethnically ‘exotic’ stars like Theda Bara and Pola Negri during the Flapper period. Animators drew from popular culture and often looked to Hollywood as a source for their material.

Advisor Mark Langer notes that when Max and Dave Fleischer asked animator Grim Natwick to design Betty Boop in 1930, they gave him an illustrated piece of sheet music with the image of the singer Helen Kane on it, and told him to make a dog that looked like her. “From her inception, Betty Boop was

intended to transgress the boundary between the animal and human world – half dog, half woman,” Langer writes in “The Freak Show: Cultural Tradition in American Animation.”

Betty is a character most likely in her twenties, and her companion is a black dog, Bimbo. New York landscapes are featured in her cartoons, along with a dynamic and constantly changing rhythm, the jazz of Harlem nightclubs as soundtrack. “It’s important to place Betty Boop within the context of an ethnically identified star coming out of the vamp era of the mid 1930s,” says Sarah Nilsen. Advisor Kathryn Fuller-Seeley adds, “You can compare her to working class Flapper heroines like Clara Bow and Joan Crawford in the 1920s, and even with Ginger Rogers, Loretta Young, and Barbara Stanwyck a little later.”

The humor in Betty Boop cartoons is physical, with strong sexual innuendo. She was often pictured in bodily peril, frequently undressed (clothes rip or fall off), and routinely chased by predatory characters. Biographer Leslie Cabarga writes, “In *Dizzy Red Riding Hood* (1931), Betty’s dress flies up and is pulled down by a nearby tree. In *Chess-Nuts* (1932) Betty is lassoed around the legs by an evil king. He pulled up the lasso and her dress with it. In *Silly Scandals* (1931), Betty’s top kept falling off, revealing a frilly bra. In *Poor Cinderella* (1934) the same darn thing happens to her ornate little top.” While the cartoons offer a positive resolution for Boop, their narratives emphasize the potential of violence to her body.

“Betty Boop was a re-sexualized female drawn by men,” comments Sarah Nilsen. “Her femininity was consistent with the sexualized images of pin-ups that circulated throughout the animation studios, and of the burlesque performers who performed at the theatre next door to the studio. But this does not mean that audiences at the time would have seen anything sexist about her – or for that matter about any of the Disney princesses now critiqued as anti-feminist. This ahistorical thinking represents contemporary notions of gender rather than the social values of the period when the films were released.”

The Depression had a significant impact on Hollywood filmmaking and American culture. Hollywood studios were facing bankruptcy in the early 1930s, with ticket sales plummeting as Americans struggled to survive. The Jazz Age became associated with the excesses of the Roaring Twenties. In 1934, Hollywood began enforcing the Motion Picture Production Code, a set of moral guidelines for the industry, which led to the waning popularity of stars like Mae West and Marlene Dietrich, and the increasing popularity of new stars like Shirley Temple. Depictions of women changed in live action films as well as in cartoons.

In response to the Code’s emphasis on modesty, Betty became taller, slimmer, and lost most of her ringlet curls (the hairstyle had gone out of fashion by this time). Her wardrobe grew more conservative, and she involved herself with domestic matters such as housekeeping or childcare. Her main love interest – Bimbo, a dog that she kissed – also disappeared, their relationship suggestive of bestiality. Secondary male characters were introduced, like Pudgy and Grampy, who often rescued Betty from troublesome situations. These changes led to the demise of her popularity.

“The Code stunted the possibilities for growth in female characters,” observes advisor Carmenita Higginbotham. “Once you take sexual independence out of the equation, there’s no explanation for a woman’s financial or social success. The sexuality of the female body post-Code became either muted (like Katherine Hepburn) or dangerous (like Claire Trevor). Betty Davis is a little more complicated post-Code woman; she stays spunky, but there’s always a cost, a societal corrective.”

Olive Oyl, Popeye’s tall, rubbery, and lithe girlfriend, was the Fleischer’s next heroine, voiced by the same actress who voiced Betty Boop, Mae Questel. She was more domesticated than Betty but also physically nontraditional, with enormous feet, a grating voice, a long nose, and a hot temper. Bud Sagendorf, who drew her character for many years, recorded her measurements as 19-19-19. Advisor Mark Langer comments, “Olive may have been a scarecrow, but the humor in her character comes



through in part because she is absolutely convinced that she is the most sexually desirable woman in the world. This was made even funnier by the fact of Popeye and Bluto treating her as if it was true.”

In the 1920s all animators were men. The Disney studios did not accept “girls” into their training program until 1939 (although Disney’s wife, Lillian, worked as an inker and painter there in 1924). In 1931 the Fleischers hired Lillian Friedman, first as an inker and then as their first female animator. She worked on *Betty Boop* cartoons, on one *Popeye*, and on two Oscar-nominated *Color Classics*.

The women behind the Fleischer men were strong and untraditional, starting with their mother Abigail, who had refused to shave her hair after she was married (as was the custom for Jewish women). Max’s wife Essie is reputed to have had better business sense than her husband, and a take-no-prisoners attitude that earned her a few unprintable nicknames.

### 3. Race in Early Animations

The Fleischer films overlaid the Jewish immigrant experience with common racial stereotypes of the day. As advisor Christopher Lehman points out, “There was the shuffling, not-too-bright African-American custodian in *Out of the Inkwell*, the blackface singers in *Sing Sisters Sing*, the big-lipped Africans in *I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead You Rascal You*, and the Native Americans in *Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh*.” This was not atypical; other cartoons from that time included big-lipped African-American jazzy frogs in MGM’s *The Old Millpond* and Mickey Mouse’s blackface imitation of a slave in *Mickey’s Mellerdrammer*.”

But the Fleischer cartoons also gave voice to some of the leading African-American artists of the day, who greatly influenced the Fleischers, especially when it came to music. They worked in New York and were familiar with the jazz scene and nightclubs of Harlem. Lou Fleischer often went to these clubs; he was a great jazz enthusiast, and went out of his way to hire Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, Don Redman and the Mills Brothers.

In his book *Tunes for Toons: Music and the Hollywood Cartoon*, Daniel Goldmark notes that the popular understanding of jazz at that time was tied to the idea of primitivism, both in terms of racial origin and the syncopated rhythm of the music itself. “By couching the featured songs within the stereotyped narratives that shaped the musicians’ live acts, the Fleischer cartoons enabled moviegoing audiences around the country to experience a...version of those narratives previously enjoyed only by nightclub patrons in New York City.” In other words, the Fleischer cartoons made the urban jazz experience accessible to people across the entire United States.

What was missing for audiences outside New York was context. “These films gave new visibility for artists of color, who were trying to work out how to bring an ‘authentic’ artistic product to a mixed audience with its preconceived ideas about race and performance,” says advisor Amy Holberg. “But isolating these numbers from the diverse milieu of New York and the jazz clubs made it easier for audiences to consume their primitivist and even racist presentations without consideration of how the artists intended their images to be consumed.”

Fleischer animations often characterized African-American musicians as animals or stereotypical natives, transforming their appearances into forms more commonly accepted by the general public. *Minnie the Moocher*, for instance, opens with the earliest known footage of Cab Calloway, dancing with his orchestra in a live action sequence. The plot has Betty Boop arguing with her parents and running away from home, only to become lost in a cave of surreal horrors. At the climax of this sequence, we see a rotoscoped Calloway dancing to the titular song, but transformed from his human form into an anthropomorphic walrus. Louis Armstrong’s debut is similar in *I’ll Be Glad When You’re Dead You Rascal, You*, a 1932

Betty Boop episode. This film places Betty in a jungle, where Armstrong and his orchestra first appear as cannibals, until he transforms as a disembodied head – both real and animated.

Despite the problematic aspects of these depictions, the Fleischer films nevertheless promoted African-American musicians as skilled artists and increased their national visibility. And not all of the animators liked it. According to advisor Mark Langer, “Shamus Culhane, who had some classical musical education, abhorred working on the films and despised jazz. Ironically, he later directed some wonderful jazz films at the Lantz Studio in the 1940s.”

There were also issues of cultural appropriation. In May 1932, the actress said to be the inspiration for Betty Boop, Helen Kane, filed a \$250,000 infringement lawsuit against Max Fleischer. She presented as proof early recordings of her singing Betty’s signature “Boop-a-doop” ditty. But during the trial, the manager for African jazz singer Esther Jones testified that Helen Kane had in fact stolen *her* act from Jones, aka “Baby Esther.” (Later evidence showed that Jones may have based *her* act on the scat singing of another African-American artist, vaudeville performer Gertrude Saunders.) The trial dragged on for two years, during which time Esther Jones died. When Max Fleischer located a 1928 sound film of Baby Esther performing “Boop-a-doop,” the case ended and Max celebrated with a “Victory Newsreel,” appearing with several of the women who voiced Betty. Family members today point out that Betty and other characters were rarely based on just one city “type,” but instead drew from the melting pot of urban New York.

The move to Miami in 1939 changed things, as the studio now had to contend with social practices of the Jim Crow South. Around Miami, for example, animators watched as convicts did lawn work while cops foiled all attempts to bring the sweltering men cold drinks. At 10:00 pm, all African-Americans had to be off the street or risk being thrown in jail. The morning after Lou Fleischer had Cab Calloway over to visit at his Miami home, there was a warning note in his mailbox from the local Ku Klux Klan. There were also signs posted in shops forbidding Jews from entering, which proved particularly upsetting to the Fleischers and the studio’s numerous Jewish employees.

#### **4. From Rotoscope to CG: Invention & Realism in Animation**

Animation today is a blockbuster business and a medium for storytelling on the full range of human experience, across platforms including movies, television, and games. Then and now, it has been shaped by innovators like the Fleischers, who continually pushed the boundaries of what was possible. Through hand-drawn cel animations, 2D vector-based animations, 3D CG (computer graphics) animations, stop motion and motion graphics, to virtual and augmented reality today, animators have learned to create ever more realistic animations – to the delight and sometimes also to the dismay of their audiences.

The whole Fleischer family loved to invent. Their father William created several devices for the tailoring industry, and older brother Charles had many patents, including one for the “claw” machine used at the Coney Island arcades. Together the family had more than 30 patented inventions in a range of fields. “They wanted to make films, but they were inventors,” notes animator and producer J.J. Sedelmaier, “so they couldn’t help themselves from devising new mechanical and creative ways to do things.”

Max had drawn comic strips for the *Brooklyn Eagle* and then became art editor of *Popular Science Monthly*, while his younger brother Dave worked as a film editor for Pathé. There was no cartoon industry in the early 1900s, and no principles of how to animate. Cartoons were short, pen-and-ink drawings much like flipbooks, transferred to film via photography (or drawn directly on film strips), and when shown they moved in a jerky hiccupping manner – nothing like real-life motion.

After Max Fleischer's boss at *Popular Science Monthly* saw an early and very jerky film, he called Max into his office and said, "You're an artist, you understand mechanics, machinery, photography, and you've got a scientific mind. Surely you can come up with some way to make animated cartoons look better!"

With the help of their brother Joe, who was a wizard with machinery, Max and Dave set to work building a device that would enable them to project a piece of live-action film, one frame at a time, onto a light table, so that an artist could trace the image onto a piece of paper. Dave posed for the live-action film in a clown suit. Max later wrote euphorically, "Almost a year from the time we started, we had a piece of film 100 feet long, a piece of film you could see on the screen in a minute. It represented a year's work, but it proved that the theory was correct!" They patented the device, calling it "Method of Producing Motion Picture Cartoons," later shortened to the Rotoscope.

Max went to show his sample reel to Paramount president Adolph Zukor and met John Bray, his former boss, in the lobby. Bray was now under contract with Paramount to supply short subject films, and he hired Max to help him, by producing a monthly film involving KoKo the clown. They could meet this demanding schedule because another Bray animator, Earl Hurd, had found a way to use clear celluloid (cels) instead of paper, so that backgrounds did not have to be redrawn on each frame.

Max and Dave went to work on their *Out of the Inkwell* films, and when the first cartoon was released in 1919, audiences went wild. *The New York Times* gushed: "[Koko] walks, dances, and leaps as a ... human being might. He does not jerk himself from one position to another, nor does he move an arm and leg while the remainder of his body remains as unnaturally still as if fixed in ink lines on paper."

This first motion capture animation was followed by other innovations by the brothers: a "Bouncing Ball" that enabled audiences to sing along in tempo with words on a screen; a "Rotograph" that projected film from behind using mirrors (a precursor to optical printing); and a "Stereoptical Process" that provided an illusion of 3D action through model sets placed on a rotating turntable behind the main characters. Together, these innovations helped the Fleischers make cartoons that dazzled viewers. Author and critic Leonard Maltin describes a scene from the 1923 short *Bedtime*: "The shots ... were accomplished by the simplest of means, yet this kind of ingenuity was rare in films of the 1920s, and the sequence remains disarming and funny today. Special effects teams have rigged awesome sequences for recent Hollywood epics, but there isn't a scene in *Earthquake* or *Star Wars* with the simple charm of KoKo in *Bedtime*."

A half century later, Pixar created a new means of motion capture using Computer Graphics (CG) technology, with a process that harkens back to the Rotoscope: actors stand in front of a green screen wearing a harness of sensors that record their every movement. Instead of being filmed, traced, and animated, their movements were fed into a computer to be animated. CG has made possible such realistic characters that it has opened the door to new questions and concerns. When Andy Serkis was nominated for an Academy Award for his portrayal of Gollum in *The Two Towers* (2002), for example, people objected since Serkis had never actually appeared in the film; it was only his CG character. And the realism in *The Polar Express* (2004), which features animated characters who are artistic distortions of the actors who play them, left many with a feeling of queasiness; the characters were neither real nor unreal but caught in the "Uncanny Valley" between reality and imagination.

It is almost certain that Max Fleischer would have objected to the trend towards realism. In a letter that he wrote in later years to animator Shamus Culhane, he described his efforts to retain the "cartoony" effects of his animations. He wrote, "In my opinion, the industry must pull back, pull away from the tendencies toward realism. The cartoon must be a portrayal of the expression of the true cartoonist, in a simple, unhampered cartoon style. The true cartoon is great art in its own right."

## 5. Creating an Industry: The Early Cartoon Business

Like virtual reality and augmented reality in our own day, cartooning was once a new technology, wide open to young entrepreneurs and outsiders seeking to make a name for themselves. American urban Jews, who had been shut out of older WASP-dominated industries, found an open frontier in media where they could go as far as their talents could take them.

People had been trying to create the illusion of motion for years, with mechanical devices like the zoetrope and the phantoscope, and with paper flipbooks. One of the pioneers in this field was Winsor McCay, who inspired both Max Fleischer and John Randolph Bray with his *Little Nemo* (1911) and *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) cartoons. But it took 16 images to flicker past the human eye each second to create the illusion of motion – or 6,360 drawn images for one minute of completed film – which meant that animated films were the most labor-intensive of all early motion pictures produced. McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (1918) required 25,000 drawings and took 22 months to make, an untenable production model.

Looking for a way to streamline the process, Bray turned to Frederick Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management*, a treatise published in 1911 that was transforming other industries. As advisor Tom Sito reminds us, "Taylor's theories were utilized by automaker Henry Ford to develop his famous assembly line. Bray and his production manager-wife decided to adapt this assembly-line process to making animated cartoons. This is what Americans brought to the new animation industry that had been developing all over the world: we industrialized the process."

The big Hollywood studios, Paramount, Columbia, Fox, Warner Bros., and MGM, provided the animation studios with the financial means to develop animation into an art form. They included animation in their block booking as a way to fill out their programming, and they standardized the form into seven minute (one reel) lengths.

In the beginning, there were no rules. Work was done in a slapdash, seat-of-the-pants way. As animation historian Stefan Kanfer put it, "They made things up as they went along. I don't believe that any systems were imposed other than the ones which every studio used: story lines, sketches of the characters in primary positions, inbetweeners, and the occasional accommodation of live footage." Max's granddaughter Virginia Mahoney agrees, adding, "There's a tendency to over-intellectualize what the Fleischers and their animators did. These were mostly first generation Americans, not highly educated, products of an informal apprentice system. They liked to drink, bet on horses (the direct line to the bookie was in Dave's office), gamble, and party. They were generally unsophisticated, not thinking much beyond the next gag."

Bray described how his assembly line worked. "We had the original cartoonist lay out the thing in pencil. Then another fellow would ink in certain parts of it. Then another girl or boy would put color on the back of the picture. Eventually this developed into a full assembly line, with separate departments including animation, assistant animation, story, timing, background, inbetweening, inking, opaquing (painting), camera, music, and sound – each often with its own manager and assistant manager." Max and Dave Fleischer learned this system from Bray, and then set out on their own in 1919.

Much like the Jewish moguls in Hollywood live action, their business was a family concern; Max was president and in charge of production, while Lou supervised music recordings, and Joe headed up the Machine Shop, doing maintenance on the cameras and other devices. Charlie was an electrical contractor and helped whenever needed. Dave was credited as director; according to animator Shamus Culhane, he spent his whole day in the story department, going from one animator to the next, feeding them gags.

By 1930, they had a staff of more than 100 artists, including some of the top animators of the time: Grim Natwick, George Stallings, Teddy Sears, and Dick Huemer (who drew KoKo the Clown). Animators made up to \$200 per week, which was a hefty salary in those days. Max and Dave made even more: over

\$600 per week plus dividends from profits. Meanwhile the lower level staff, who worked up to 14 hours a day, six days a week, made between \$12-18 per week. It was tough to get by on this amount, but most were young and still lived with their families, so it was manageable. But as was typical in the industry, they got no overtime pay, vacations, pensions, or health coverage. Many developed eyestrain, arthritis, and alcoholism. During the Depression era, most were grateful to have a job, but by the late 1930s there was a strong and growing pro-labor culture, encouraged by a pro-labor administration in Washington.

Workers at the Fleischer Studios walked out on strike in 1937, and stayed out for six months. The strike heavily influenced Max's decision to relocate his studio from New York to Miami, Florida, a non-union state. The move deepened the studio's financial obligations to Paramount, which paid to move all the staff and their families, build an enormous new studio, and underwrite their short cartoons and two features. Disney had diversified his financial backing, but the Fleischers were connected to Paramount by an unbreakable umbilical cord; it would prove to be their undoing when things got tough.

#### **D. Creative Approach**

*Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story* will be the first documentary ever to look in depth at this family of animation pioneers. It will combine archival footage, cartoon clips, original interviews, new original animations, and music to bring to life the creative genius of the Fleischer brothers and their world.

Archival materials, drawn from the collections listed in Section M, include home movies and photographs of the Fleischer family, early rushes and experimental films made at the studio, and extensive clips and artwork from the Fleischer cartoons. These will be intercut with interviews with family members, friends, collectors, historians, musicians, and animators.

We will create selective new animations that blur the border between live-action and cartooning. Max Fleischer used this technique in his earliest series, *Out of the Inkwell*, appearing as himself (the artist) alongside his cartoon creation, KoKo the Clown. Many others since have adapted this technique: Walt Disney used it in the *Alice Comedies* (1920s) and later popularized it in *Mary Poppins* (1964). *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988) fully exploited the potential of this technique, creating a story in which a real-life detective is hired to exonerate an animated Roger Rabbit, who has been accused of murder. (Betty Boop even appears as a character in this film.) We have identified several animators who work in the Fleischer style, including Thom Foolery, Raymond Persi, Shawn Dickinson, James Sugrue, and Chris Prynosi, as well as Chad and Jared Moldenhauer, who created the popular "Cuphead" game, inspired by the Fleischers. During production, we will partner with one of them to help us create animations for the open and close of the film and for interstitials.

The soundtrack will come from some of the Fleischer cartoons, featuring the music of jazz greats like Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway. We will also use music by Gary Lucas, a contemporary composer with a traveling show called "Fleischerei," in which he shows Fleischer movies and plays along, accompanied by a Betty Boop-style singer.

#### **E. Audience and Distribution**

Today the animation industry is a behemoth in the world of cinema. Animated films are among the highest grossing ever; Disney's *Frozen* grossed \$1.2 billion in 2013, and Pixar, DreamWorks, and Industrial Light & Magic continue to push the boundaries of what is possible (and profitable). The Fleischers were pioneers of this tremendously influential medium, and creators of some of the most enduring animated characters of all time. They presented the pure joy of animation, and their work continues to inspire artists today, including Studio MDHR and their hit video game, *Cuphead*.

Our documentary will re-introduce the Fleischers to a new generation, while also filling a gap in popular understanding. “The Fleischer story is a necessary counterweight to the Disney story, which has to this point dominated popular understandings of animation,” observes advisor Sarah Nilsen.

Our production team, including Sarah Colt Productions and Kathryn Dietz, have placed over 40 hours of prime-time programming on PBS. We will offer the film for national broadcast on public television, most likely through the WNET *American Masters* series; Michael Kantor, executive producer, loves the Fleischers and has asked us to stay in contact. We may also look for a digital platform such as Netflix to reach younger audiences.

We also expect a strong world market; Asaf Galay has placed at least 50 hours of programming on Israeli Television, and his films have been shown throughout Europe, where there are many Fleischer fans. Jean-Paul Gautier, a French fashion designer, has created a line of clothing and fragrances influenced by Popeye and Betty Boop. The Annecy International Animation Film Festival in southeastern France draws animators from around the world. We will enter the film into this and other festivals, including the TCM Classic Film Festival held annually in Hollywood.

We will also host screenings in New York and Los Angeles, where our advisors and friends of the project have strong connections. In Los Angeles, our advisors Jerry Beck and Tom Sito can help us arrange for screenings at venues including the Hammer Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the International Animated Film Association (ASIFA) theatre, and at the new theatre at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. We are also in contact with the Skirball Cultural Center, which is creating an exhibition on the Fleischers that will launch in 2019, and hope to cross-promote our products together. We will also work with a distributor such as Zeitgeist Films in New York both for screenings and to place the films in educational markets.

## **F. Project Evaluation**

We will work closely with our broadcast partners to assess the reach and impact of *Cartooning America*. PBS series like *American Masters* measure the success of their programs quantitatively through ratings provided by Nielsen Media Research. On selected shows, Nielsen’s data also includes demographic information that breaks down the audience by gender, race, ethnicity, and geography.

The major PBS strands also use these additional qualitative measurements: Viewer Response (monitoring audience engagement through traditional and social media channels); Web Visitors (tracking numbers of visitors and any feedback); Critical Response (coverage in print and online publications); and Educational Response (with information from PBS Learning Media about how assets are used in classrooms).

We will collect all of this data and make it available to the NEH in our final report. We will also track educational use of the film, both through our distributor and through our advisors who use it in their classrooms. Finally, we will create an evaluation form to be used when possible in public screenings, to gauge audience response to the humanities ideas in the film.

## **G. Rights and Permissions**

The Fleischer story is supported by an extraordinarily rich visual record that to date has been distributed among scores of archives, personal collectors, auction houses, and family members. During the development stage, we researched and negotiated access to most of these repositories, discovering several unprocessed and never-before-seen collections in the process. We then created a master list of visual sources that will guide archival selections during the production stage. The visuals fall into distinct

categories: family archival, Fleischer animated titles and features, animation artwork, animation history visuals, and contextual archival. To view a full list of collections, please see section N.

The descendants of Max Fleischer have done the most work to preserve and maintain visuals of the Fleischer family and their studio. We have excellent relationships with them, developed through in-person meetings, phone calls and emails. Ginny Mahoney, Max's granddaughter and daughter of Ruth Fleischer Kneitel, is the family archivist; a former Smithsonian curator, she has shared thumbnails and captions for several hundred photographs and documents in her collection, some published to the Fleischer Studios website, but most never shared publicly before. Ginny has also read drafts of the humanities themes, and introduced us to her daughter Jeni Mahoney, who manages social media for the Fleischer Studios. We met with Jane Reid, Max's granddaughter and daughter of Richard Fleischer, while on a research trip to California; she is a trustee of Fleischer Studios and manages the copyright database. Mark Fleischer, Jane's brother, is also a trustee and has been extremely helpful in steering us to family members throughout the country. Both Jane and Mark are helping us navigate copyrights and permissions to use the likeness of Betty Boop and Popeye via King Features Syndicate.

We have also unearthed family and studio photos and footage at Georgetown University, Miami Dade College, UCLA, and the Margaret Herrick Library – archives with whom the production team has a long, positive record of securing permissions and high quality masters. The copyright owner of the *Popular Science* films is excited about the project, and offered to license the only film footage of the Miami Fleischer Studio's inner workings to the project at a discounted per second rate.

The rights to the Fleischer animated titles and features are complicated territory – character, merchandising, distribution, and music rights ownership are distributed among the Fleischer family, King Features Syndicate, Paramount, and Warner Brothers, depending on the title in question. Happily, the majority of the silent animations are in the public domain, and we have partnered with the largest personal collector of silent animated film, Tommy Jose Stathes, to obtain high quality masters. In addition to agreeing to a discounted rate for access – a rate that is compatible with a PBS budget and well below general commercial terms – Mr. Stathes will tap his network of film historians and enthusiasts to unearth the best quality masters for Fleischer public domain titles. For Fleischer titles and features that are not in the public domain, or require rights clearances for visuals or music, we will work with an experienced rights manager or entertainment lawyer in conjunction with the Fleischer family and advisor Jerry Beck to secure permission. We are confident that with the endorsement of the family, who will collaborate but not have editorial control, securing permissions for Fleischer titles will be possible.

Most of the Fleischer animation artwork is scattered among dozens of individual owners and auction houses. A major success of the development stage, therefore, was securing permission from the largest auction house, Heritage Auctions, to use any of the hundreds of pieces of animation art they currently have or have auctioned that were photographed in high resolution prior to being sold – at no cost to the project. In addition, the largest private collector of Fleischer animation art and rare Fleischer studio and production photographs, Todd Levine, has granted us private access to his 600+ images, that are available to the project at a discounted PBS rate.

Beyond artwork, we have discovered caches of Fleischer-related documents and ephemera at various archives, including the in-house newsletter “Fleischer Animated News” preserved in its near entirety at the New-York Historical Society, and the Paramount Pictures in-house newsletters at the New York Public Library, with whom Sarah Colt Productions has a long-standing relationship of rights clearances in documentary film projects.

## H. Humanities Advisors

- **Jerry Beck** is a writer, animation producer, college professor and author of more than 15 books on animation history. He is a former studio exec with Nickelodeon Movies and Disney, co-founded Cartoon Brew, and has written for *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety*. He has curated cartoons for DVD and Blu-ray compilations and has lent his expertise to dozens of bonus documentaries and audio commentaries. Beck is on the faculty of both Woodbury University in Burbank and Cal Arts in Valencia, and is currently editing two blogs, Animation Scoop (for news) and Cartoon Research (history).
- **Paul Buhle** is the retired Senior Lecturer, Brown University. The founder of several journals and of the Oral History of the American Left archive, New York University, Brown is also the author or editor of 53 volumes including five volumes on the Hollywood Blacklist, a dozen non-fiction comic art volumes, and several scholarly volumes on comic arts including *Jews and American Comics* and the prize-winning *Art of Harvey Kurtzman*. He is also the editor of *Jews in American Popular Culture* (3 volumes) and *Jews and American Comics*.
- **Kathryn Fuller-Seeley** is the William P. Hobby Professor in the Radio-Television-Film Department at the University of Texas at Austin. Her research explores the cultural contexts surrounding media history and their audiences. Her publications include *At the Picture Show: Small Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (1997), *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Moviegoing History* (2008) and *One Thousand Nights at the Movies: An Illustrated History of Motion Pictures 1895-1915* (2013). Her most recent book is *Jack Benny and the Golden Age of American Radio Comedy*.
- **Carmenita Higginbotham** is an associate professor of American Art and Culture at the University of Virginia. Her research examines early 20<sup>th</sup> century America art with an emphasis on how notions of “the city” have had an impact on representation. Her undergraduate teaching includes lecture courses on the history of American Art, Popular Visual Culture, African American art, Art Film, as well as the cultural and visual impact of Disney in American popular culture. Her most recent publication is *The Urban Scene: Race, Reginald Marsh and American Art* (2015).
- **Amelia (Amy) Holberg** is the author of a variety of articles and reviews including “Betty Boop: Yiddish Film Star,” published in *American Jewish History*, and “Home on the Range: The Cowboy and the Noodle Chef,” in the Korean *Journal of English and American Studies*. Her continuing research interests include religion and media, understanding identity and its expression in art, and virtual pedagogy. She is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland University College, where she teaches courses in film, the humanities, Women’s Studies, and sociology.
- **Mark Langer** is an adjunct research professor and retired associate professor in the School for Studies in Art and Culture at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. His research interests are the Disney and Fleischer studios. He has been on the editorial boards of *Cinema Journal*, *Film History*, and *Animation History*, and has curated film exhibitions at MOMA and the American Museum of the Moving Image (NY), La Cinematheque Francaise (Paris), and the Los Angeles County Museum. He has contributed to leading academic journals and has worked as a programmer for several international film festivals.
- **Christopher P. Lehman** is a professor of Ethnic Studies at St. Cloud State University. His books include *The Colored Cartoon: Black Representation in American Animated Short Films, 1907-1954*, and he is a writer for Jerry Beck’s website *Cartoon Research*. He was a visiting fellow at the W. E. B. DuBois Institute for African and African American Research



(now the Hutchins Center) at Harvard University in 2011, through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

- **Sarah Nilsen** is an associate professor and director of Film and Television Studies at the University of Vermont. Her book, *Projecting America: Film and Cultural Diplomacy at the Brussels World's Fair*, examined the use of film as part of the U.S. soft power strategy during the Cold War. She completed a companion volume, *Post-Racial Hollywood: Film in Trump's America*, to her edited collection, *The Colorblind Screen: Race and Television in Postracial America* (2014). She is working on a book manuscript, *Where Dreams Begin: A Cultural History of the Disney Princesses*, and has published articles on girl's media culture and contemporary race theory.
- **Tom Sito** is an artist, film historian, and Professor of Cinema Practice at the George Lucas School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California. A Hollywood animator for 42 years, he has won Oscars for eight films including *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *The Lion King* (1994), and *Shrek* (2001). He has lectured on animation around the world is the author of several books, including *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson* and *Moving Innovation*. □

In addition, other scholars who helped during the development phase and have continued to be available include:

- **Donald Crafton** at the University of Notre Dame.
- **N.C. Christopher Couch** at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. □
- **Barbara Mann** at The Jewish Theological Seminary.

## I. Media Team

**Asaf Galay** (Director) has directed numerous award-winning documentaries for Israeli television, including a series on Israeli humor (*In the Jewish Land*, 2005), and a feature film on the Israeli poet Nathan Alterman (*Sentimentality Allowed*, 2012), which is used by the Israeli Education Ministry and screened in schools throughout Israel. He wrote, directed and produced the recent documentary on Nobel Prize-winning Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Muses of Bashevis Singer*, 2015; this film opened the 2015 New York Jewish Film Festival and has been screened at festivals around the world. He also directed and produced *The Hebrew Superhero* (2016), described by Tablet magazine as a “supremely entertaining” film on the subject of comics in Israeli history. In addition to his acclaimed film and television career, Galay is museum curator at Beit Hatfutsot, the Museum for the Jewish People located in Tel Aviv. He is head curator of exhibits on Bob Dylan (“Forever Young”), Jewish Humor (“Laughing at History”), Jewish fashion designers (“Dream Weavers”), and is curator of an exhibit, “Amy Winehouse – A Family Portrait.”

**Kathryn Dietz** (Writer and Executive Producer) has written and executive produced other NEH-funded films including *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* by Asaf Galay and *Nasser's Republic: The Making of Modern Egypt* by Michal Goldman. Previously she produced five feature-length documentaries about China, biographical portraits of Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary Pickford, and a film about Japanese-American incarceration in Arkansas during World War II, most of them funded by the NEH and all broadcast nationally on PBS. She was a founding owner of Ambrica Productions in New York for 23 years, and then Executive Director of Filmmakers Collaborative (our nonprofit fiscal sponsor) for four. She is a Visiting Artist at Tufts University, her alma mater, where she is creating a series of short films about autistic teens and adults, and mentoring many young filmmakers.

**Helen Dobrowski** (Producer), an employee of Sarah Colt Productions for almost a decade, is the producer of *The Gilded Age*, a two-hour documentary that will premiere on PBS/American Experience on February 6. She co-produced the NEH-funded *Walt Disney*, a four-hour biography that premiered on

PBS/American Experience in September 2015, and was the associate producer on the NEH-funded *Henry Ford* for PBS/American Experience. Her previous projects, also with Sarah Colt Productions, include episodes three and four of *God in America* (PBS airdate 2010) and *The Polio Crusade* (PBS airdate 2009). She is involved in the research, fundraising, and development of an independent documentary about New York's Co-op City, and also works as a freelancer specializing in archival and content research, licensing, and production for Boston and New York City-area producers.

## **J. Progress**

The film's director, Asaf Galay got the idea for this film while making *The Hebrew Superhero* in 2014. That year he began meeting with biographers, archivists, collectors, and others with an interest in the Fleischers, and began compiling an advisory board. In 2015 he met Mark Fleischer (grandson of Max) Stanley Handman (family lawyer), and Larry McCallister (the archivist at Paramount Studios who handles licensing), all of whom were enthusiastic about this project, offering access to archival materials and personal and professional contacts.

In 2016, Galay began collaborating with Kathryn Dietz, a writer and executive producer with whom he has worked in the past. With the help of David Weinstein, our NEH program officer, we expanded our advisory board. We partnered with Sarah Colt Productions to add Helen Dobrowski, co-producer of the NEH-funded *Walt Disney* and *Henry Ford* documentaries, to join the media team, and secured fiscal sponsorship from Filmmakers Collaborative in Boston.

The NEH awarded us a development grant in the summer of 2017, and with this funding we began the six-month development phase. We added animation historians Jerry Beck and Tom Sito to our board of advisors, as well as UVA professor Carmenita Higginbotham, and consulted with them extensively. We completed extensive archival research, which has led to the discovery of hundreds of never-before-seen photographs relating to Fleischer history (described in Section M). We created databases to track these archival resources, made significant headway in understanding the rights situation with Fleischer animations (held by multiple parties), and began negotiations to secure permissions.

To deepen the humanities themes and inform the latest script, we have met in person and/or spoken by phone with advisors, family members, biographers, animators, and museum curators with an expertise in the Fleischers and their work. Together our team has pre-interviewed more than 25 new people who can help us bring to life the story of the Fleischer brothers; their contributions are included throughout this proposal.

We have been especially pleased to discover the great enthusiasm that the Fleischer family members have for our project, sharing closely-held resources and personal anecdotes, and connecting us with others who can help us tell our story.

## **K. Work Plan**

The production timeline for this 60-minute documentary on the Fleischer family and studio unfolds over 32 weeks. Director Asaf Galay and writer/executive producer Kathryn Dietz will head up the production with support from the Sarah Colt Productions team, particularly producer Helen Dobrowski. The team will work closely with the advisory board and with Filmmakers Collaborative, our fiscal sponsor.

Weeks 1-6: Final Research/Scripting/Pre-Production (6 weeks)

During the first two months of the project, Galay will assemble his production team to review and refine content and archival research. The producer will connect with researchers who will work remotely at

archives in Los Angeles, Detroit, and Washington, DC. The team will prioritize interviews and scout shooting locations, as well as finalize a shooting script.

#### Weeks 7-10: Principal Photography & Edit Prep (4 weeks)

Over the course of 4 weeks, we conduct interviews of historians (including several of the project's advisors), scholars, and family members during six days of principal photography. Archival materials will be gathered, organized and catalogued under the supervision of the producer in preparation for editing. At the end of principal photography, two weeks will be devoted to importing and reviewing original photography and archival material, reading and organizing interview transcripts, and preparing the script for editing.

#### Weeks 11-28: Edit (18 weeks)

The director and producer will work with an experienced documentary editor over the duration of the edit schedule. Off-line editing will be done on Avid non-linear editing systems. All project advisors will be consulted during this period regarding content decisions. The composer will begin work on an original music score. Archival materials will be finalized and master materials ordered. Any supplemental shooting will take place during this phase. Rough cuts and fine cuts of the program will be screened by the broadcast partner, editorial staff, and the project advisors, and their feedback incorporated. The special animations and the graphic effects will be designed and executed. After fine cut review, the final photo animation of still images will be planned and photographed, and the editor will bring the program to picture lock.

#### Weeks 29-32: Post Production/Delivery (4 weeks)

During post-production, an experienced sound editor will finalize the sound design. The composer will work on the final score. Music tracks will be produced, revised and approved. The narration and voice-overs will be recorded and edited into the film. Music will be recorded; sound design will be completed; and the final program will be mixed and on-lined. Titles and credits will be added. Rights clearances for archival material will be finalized. Music cue sheets, releases, rights, and relevant supplementary information will be assembled. Financial reports will be prepared following the completion of these final stages of production.

Our plan is for the completed 60-minute program to be packaged and promoted by our broadcast partner. DVDs of the program will be made for release to the press. Publicity shots will be ordered, press releases will be written and posted, and promotional spots will be created for broadcast promotion.

### **L. Fundraising Plan**

We have developed this film to date with a \$60,000 grant from the NEH and another \$10,000 from the Jerusalem Fund, and will return to both sources for production funding. Our production budget totals \$690,000. We are asking the NEH for \$600,000 and will ask the Jerusalem Fund for another \$10,000. They have a specialized mission to support films about animation with small grants; because the Fleischer brothers were Jewish and because of the director's very successful film, *The Hebrew Superhero* (which they funded), we are confident of their continued support.

To make up the other \$80,000 shortfall in our production budget, we will apply to other specially targeted foundations. The two most likely candidates are the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, which will likely be interested in the Fleischers' inventions and technological advancements that helped shape the new animation industry, and the Righteous Persons Foundation, which seeks to galvanize the power of the arts, media, and storytelling to preserve Jewish history and make it accessible to future generations.

When we begin editing we will make arrangements with broadcast partners including WNET's *American Masters* series and possibly the Netflix and the Discovery Channel in Poland (which has supported the director's earlier work) to support a companion website, and costs for promotion and distribution.

### **M. Organizational Profile**

Filmmakers Collaborative (FC), our fiscal sponsor, is a tax-exempt organization that has been providing low cost fiscal sponsorship to independent media makers since it was founded in 1987. It became a national organization in 2008, and is now the grantee of record for over 1,200 media projects across the country. Its mission is to sponsor and support the independent media community through fiscal sponsorship as well through programs that bring people together for learning and networking. These include its Making Media Now conference, the annual Boston International Kids Film Festival, plus workshops, internships and mentoring opportunities. Kathryn Dietz was FC's executive director for four years, ensuring a seamless interface for this project.

Sarah Colt Productions (SCP) is an independent company founded in 2008 with a commitment to create visually striking, character-driven documentaries aimed to educate and inspire wide national audiences. The company has produced numerous high profile programs for the WGBH *American Experience* series, including *The Gilded Age* (2018), *Walt Disney* (2015), and *Henry Ford* (2013), as well as numerous other award-winning films for PBS. Helen Dobrowski produces films with and for SCP, and is the person we are working with most closely on this *Cartooning America* project.

### **N. List of Collections to be Used**

Academy Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences - Academy Film Archive: Has over 200 Inkwell and Fleischer Studio animated shorts, including *Out of the Inkwells*, *Betty Boops*, *Screen Songs*, *Talkartoons*, and *Color Classics*.

Academy Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences - Margaret Herrick Library: Collection includes several folders of photographs and materials, including production stills, promotional and candid photographs of Dave Fleischer, animation artwork, story graphs, and unprocessed Paramount Production records.

Brooklyn Historical Society: Holds unprocessed, rare photographs across Brooklyn streets, synagogues, and houses ca. 1890 to 1920, including Brownsville, where the Fletchers spent their childhood years.

Harvey Deneroff: Owns extremely rare footage of Fleischer Studio employees on the roof of their New York City building and on a company picnic, shot by his father, Fleischer animator Joe Deneroff. The film is held by and accessible to us at the UCLA Film & Television Archives.

Georgetown University - Quigley Archives: Has studio portraits of Dave and Max Fleischer, production photographs from *Gulliver's Travels*, and rare photos of Max and Dave Fleischer at *Gulliver* premiere's and promotional tours, and Max signing a production contract with Paramount.

Heritage Auctions: The world's largest collectibles auctioneer has sold hundreds of pieces of Fleischer animation artwork, including storyboards, color cels, sketches, and scripts - nearly all of which have been photographed or scanned in high resolution. We have secured permission to use these images of auctioned items at no cost.

Todd Levine: Independent collector with a database of thousands of pieces of animation art and archival photographs, including over 600 relating to the Fleischer Studios and brothers, with rare behind-the-scenes photos in the studio, photographs of animators, and candid photographs of Dave Fleischer.

Library of Congress: In addition to holding scores of context-related photographs of New York City, Brooklyn, and Coney Island, the Library of Congress also has Fleischer-related animation artwork, accessible to us via curator Sara Duke.

Virginia Mahoney, Chevy Chase, MD: The granddaughter of Max Fleischer and daughter of Seymour Kneitel, a top Fleischer animator, she has granted us access to her collection of several hundred unique, never-before-seen studio-related and personal photographs, memorabilia, artwork, and letters. She is the Fleischer family archivist and holds the largest collection of Fleischer family materials.

Museum of the City of New York, NY: Has extensive, evocative photographs of street scenes, aerials, skylines, and people of New York City from the 1900s-1930s when the Fleischers lived and worked in Brooklyn and Manhattan.

Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY: Rare Fleischer titles, including an “Inklings” episode from the 1920s, a nitrate technicolor print of their feature film *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*, and a Fleischer file containing studio material and correspondence from the 1940s.

National Archives, College Park, MD: Collections include archival footage of New York City, America during the Great Depression, World War I, World War II, and the Cold War; and military films produced by Walt Disney Studio, a major Fleischer competitor.

Natural History Museum, Los Angeles County, Seaver Center: Animation Collection contains background scenes, cels, sequential drawings, scripts, and photographs, including a set labeled “Bray, 1911.” There early animation work of Walter Lantz, Leon Schlesinger Productions (pre-Warner Bros.) and Fleischer Studios. The Museum also has collections relating to Walt Disney.

The New York Historical Society: Has nearly all of the Fleischer Studio newsletters (some hand-colored editions with photographs) that details studio events, employee biographies, caricatures, and letters from Max and Dave. Also holds a wealth of original photographs, many unprocessed, of New York from the 1890s to 1940s. Highlights include the Browning collection, which has portraits of Lower East Side tenements, and the vast Geographical File, which shows buildings and aerial views across the city.

New York Public Library, Streetscape and Townscape of Metropolitan New York City, 1860-1942 Collection, New York, NY: Collection includes street scenes, aerials, and skylines of NYC in 1920s.

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center, New York, NY: Has a set of in-house newsletters from Paramount Pictures (the distributor of Fleischer Studio animations) from the 1930s. Each issue contains unique sales art, many pieces in color, featuring *Betty Boop*, *Popeye*, and images from *Gulliver's Travels* and *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*.

NYU Tamiment Library, New York, NY: Includes a full oral history with Dave Fleischer, a full production guide from Fleischer Studios including several charts and drawings, as well as a construction guide and frame-by-frame drawing of Fleischer character Wiffle Piffle.

Oviatt Library, Special Collections and Archives, California State University, Northridge, CA: Has the largest collection of Fleischer strike materials, including news articles, letters, leaflets, and photographs.

Jane Fleischer Reid: The granddaughter of Max Fleischer has a collection of photographs showing Max Fleischer at Fort Sill, OK, where he made Army training films as a civilian employee. She also has a custom-built database of the hundreds of Inkwell and Fleischer Studios animated shorts, with copyright information that she has made accessible to the project.

Shields Pictures, Inc.: Owns the entire *Popular Science* film collection, including an episode with the only known behind-the-scenes film footage of the Fleischer Studio animating a *Popeye* episode, promised to the project at a rate compatible with a public television budget.

Stanford University: William R. and Louise Fielder Sheet Music Collection contains the Popeye song folio, with 24 complete and original songs and cartoons, including “I’m Popeye the Sailor Man.”

Tommy Joe Stathes: The largest private collection of silent and sound-era animation titles, including many ‘orphan films’ that are difficult to access elsewhere in film and master formats. Holdings include dozens of Fleischer titles, including 38 *Out of the Inkwell* films and several *Betty Boop* and *Song Cartunes*. Also has titles from animation pioneers Winsor McCay and J.R. Bray.

Pat Timberg: The daughter of Sammy Timberg, who wrote many of the best Fleischer cartoon songs, has granted us access to her recordings of her father’s work to use in the project.

UCLA Film and Television Archive: The Creative Film Society collection contains well-preserved and restored animation film titles from the Fleischers (Betty Boop), Pat Sullivan, and other contemporaries.

Wolfson Archives (Florida Moving Image Archives at Miami Dade College): Has preserved one of the only pieces of home footage of the Fleischer Studio in Miami. In addition, this archive contains thousands of feet of home footage of Miami, as well as a cut promotional film advertising travel to Miami in the era when the Fleischers first arrived there.

## **O. Preliminary Interviews**

During the development phase, we have consulted with all of our humanities advisors, listed in Section H. In addition, we have met and/or spoken with the individuals who are listed alphabetically below. During production, we will gather additional comments for the Epilogue, from young animators working in the Fleischer style, and from designers, celebrities, and other artists who have been influenced by the Fleischers’ work.

Mike Barrier: Author of *American Animation in its Golden Age*.

Howard Beckerman: Author of a book on animation and an animator at Terrytoons and then Famous Studios in the early 1950s; he toured Fleischer studio during the making of *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*.

Zavier Leslie Cabarga: Author of *The Fleischer Story*; he interviewed several of the Fleischer brothers during the 1970s and has a collection of Fleischer materials.

Dan Danglo: Friend of Howard Beckerman who worked for Max Fleischer and J.R. Bray.

DeeDee Daniel: Lou Fleischer’s daughter-in-law and widow of Bernie Fleischer (Lou’s son).

Harvey Deneroff: Son of a Fleischer background painter. He published a dissertation about the strike and its effect on the Fleischer family and studio.

G. Michael Dobbs: Editor and film historian who is currently writing a book about the Fleischer Studio.

Bruce Fleischer: Max Fleischer’s grandson. He recalls visiting Max and Essie in New York City.

Glenn Fleischer: Joe Fleischer’s great-grandson. He has a box of letters written by the Fleischer brothers that he is sharing with the project.

Jason Fleischer: Joe Fleischer’s great-grandson.

Joel Fleischer: Joe Fleischer’s grandson; he has a wealth of anecdotes about his grandfather’s contributions to the family business.

Julie Fleischer: Lou Fleischer’s granddaughter.

Mark Fleischer: Max’s grandson and the head trustee of Fleischer Studios, on whose behalf he wrote a letter of support to this project. He is key to access to Max’s personal archives.

Steve Fleischer: Grandson of Lou Fleischer.

Frank Gladstone: Animator and author with a special interest in the Fleischer's Miami period. The executive producer of the Annie (animation) awards, he met Joe and Max Fleischer while they were alive.

Daniel Goldmark: Author of books about film and cartoon music, including *Tunes for 'Toons: Music and the Hollywood Cartoon*, which features Lou Fleischer.

Ksenya Gurshtein: Curator of new Fleischer exhibit at the Skirball Cultural Center in L.A. with whom we will partner to share visual and content resources.

Stan Handman: Longtime Fleischer lawyer and family friend, and trustee of Fleischer Studios.

Stefan Kanfer: Novelist, cinema and theatre reviewer, and author of *Serious Business: The Art and Commerce of Animation in America from Betty Boop to Toy Story*.

Yvette Kaplan: Director, producer, and animator of *Beavis and Butt-Head* and *Ice Age*, and an avid Fleischer fan.

Norman Klein: Critic, media historian, and author of *Seven Minutes: The Life and Death of the American Animated Cartoon*.

Barbara Lewis: Historian of the Harlem theatre scene in the 1920s and NYC in the 1930s.

Virginia Mahoney: Granddaughter of Max Fleischer, a former museum curator, and a trustee of Fleischer Studios, she is the organizer of Max and Seymour Kneitel's family archive.

Jeni Mahoney: Virginia's daughter, in charge of Fleischer Studios social media, who was Essie Fleischer's pen pal for many years.

Ray Pointer: Author of a book on the Fleischer Studio who has met many animators and is willing to share his collection with us for our film.

Madeline Prager: Granddaughter of Dave Fleischer.

Jane Reid: Max Fleischer's granddaughter who is an expert on copyrighted material and a trustee of Fleischer Studios.

J.J. Sedelmaier: Animator and producer who recently curated the "It All Started Here" animation history exhibit with Howard Beckerman in White Plains, NY.

Bea Stone: Last living daughter of Dave Fleischer, now 98 years old.

Pat Timberg: Daughter of Sammy Timberg, who wrote many of iconic Fleischer cartoon songs.

Rosalie Waldman: Widow of long-time Fleischer animator Myron Waldman.

## **P. User-generated Content**

At present, we have no plans for user-generated content for this project. Once we have a confirmed broadcast partner at PBS, this may change. PBS series like *American Experience* and *American Masters* have robust websites for the films they broadcast, monitored according to established PBS principles to avoid any indecent or defamatory content.

## SCRIPT

---

*The Script below is derived from scores of pre-interviews and written memoirs plus archival film and photos and numerous Fleischer cartoons. There are more people listed as interviewees than we will use in the film; for now, we have captured the best comments from a wide range of storytellers.*

*The story is laid out in four Acts, each introduced by original animation. The Act titles may change, and details for original animations will be worked out with the contemporary animator we select; it will be someone who works in the Fleischer style.*

*While not specifically indicated in this Script, we will certainly use music throughout the film, both from the cartoons and composed for the film in the Fleischer style.*



Tease

(b) (4)



(b) (4)



**CARTOONING AMERICA**  
**The Fleischer Brothers Story**

(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)





(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)





(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)





(b) (4)



(b) (4)



(b) (4)



## **DIGITAL DESIGN**

---

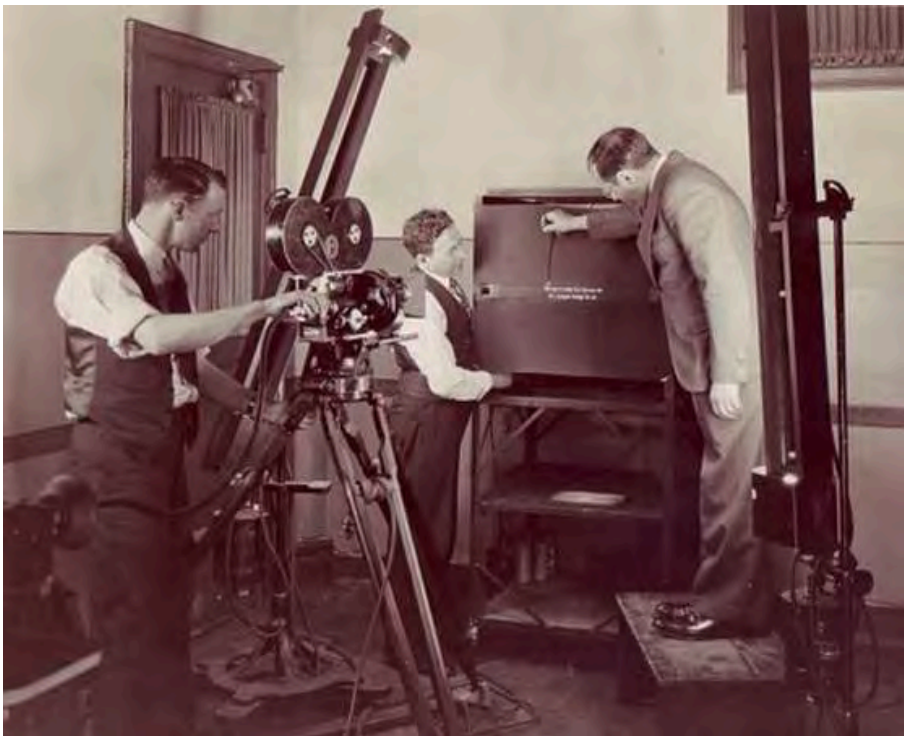
We are not requesting support for any digital design components with this application.

## IMAGES

---



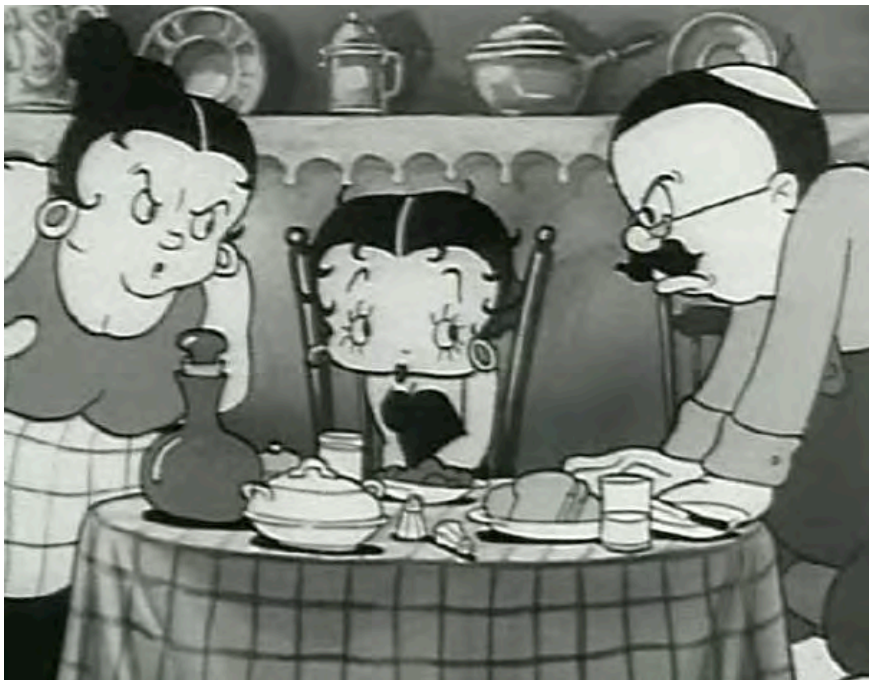
Dave Fleischer poses as KoKo the Clown circa 1920.  
(Ray Pointer)



Joe and Lou Fleischer,  
with Charlie Shettler  
operating the camera,  
film “bouncing ball”  
cartoons in 1935. (Todd  
Levine)



Max Fleischer with Betty Boop  
circa 1932. (Ray Pointer)



Betty Boop with  
her parents in  
*Minnie the  
Moocher*, 1932.



A Paramount Newsletter ad promotes the profitable Betty Boop cartoons, 1936. (New York Public Library)



The Popeye Club of Salt Lake City, Utah, meets a Popeye impersonator in 1936. (Utah Department of Heritage and Arts)





Popeye the Sailor Man in *I Eats My Spinach*, 1936.



All of the Fleischer brothers celebrate Max and Essie's anniversary with other family and friends, 1930. (Virginia Kneitel Mahoney)





Fleischer Studio employees on strike in August 1937. (Fleischer Studios)



Fleischer characters anticipate the studio move to Miami, Florida, 1938. (New York Public Library)



A hand-painted animation cel from *Gulliver's Travels*, 1939. (Heritage Auctions)



Dave Fleischer adjusts a stereoptical model of New York City for *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*, ca. 1941. (Fleischer Studios)



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

- Barrier, J. Michael. Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in Its Golden Age. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Beck, Jerry. Animation Art: From Pencil to Pixel, the History of Cartoon, Anime, and CGI. London: Flametree Publishing, 2015.
- Beck, Jerry, ed. *Cartoon Research*. Webblog, 2018, <http://cartoonresearch.com>. Multiple articles accessed September 2017 - January 2018.
- Beckerman, Howard. Animation: The Whole Story. New York: Allworth Press, 2003.
- Bowers, Q. David and Fuller-Seeley, Kathryn. One Thousand Nights at the Movies: An Illustrated History of Motion Pictures 1895-1915. Atlanta: Whitman, 2013.
- Buhle, Paul. From the Lower East Side to Hollywood: Jews in American Popular Culture. London: Verso, 2004.
- Cabarga, Leslie. The Fleischer Story. New York: Nostalgia Press, 1976.
- Canemaker, John. The Art of the Animated Image, an Anthology. Los Angeles, CA: American Film Institute, 1988.
- Crafton, Donald. Before Mickey: The Animated Film, 1898-1928. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993.
- Culhane, Shamus. Talking Animals and Other People. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998.
- Deneroff, Harvey. "'We Can't Get Much Spinach': Organization and Implementation of the Fleischer Animation Strike." *Film History* 1, No. 1 (1987): 1-14. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3815036>
- Dial, Dorothy. "Cartoons in Paradise: How the Fleischer Brothers Moved to Miami and Lost Their Studio" in *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 78, No. 3 (Winter, 2000), pp. 309-330.
- Douglas, Ann. Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s. Ferrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 1995.
- Fleischer, Richard. Out of the Inkwell: Max Fleischer and the Animation Revolution. Lexington: Kentucky UP, 2011.
- Fuller-Seeley, Kathryn. Jack Benny and the Golden Age of Radio Comedy. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.
- Gabler, Neal. Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination. New York: Knopf, 2006.

Goldmark, Daniel and Yuval Taylor, eds. The Cartoon Music Book. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2002.

Higginbotham, Carmenita. The Urban Scene: Race, Reginald Marsh and American Art. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2015.

Holberg, Amelia. "Betty Boop: Yiddish Film Star" in *American Jewish History*, Vol. 87, No. 4 (December 1999), pp. 291-312. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/516/pdf>

Kanfer, Stefan. Serious Business: The Art and Commerce of Animation in America from Betty Boop to "Toy Story." New York: Da Capo Press, 2000.

Klein, Norman. Seven Minutes: The Life and Death of the Animated Cartoon. London: Verso, 1998.

Koszarski, Richard. An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928. New York: Scribner, 1990.

Langer, Mark. "Institutional Power and the Fleischer Studios: The 'Standard Production Reference.'" *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter, 1991), pp. 3-22.

Langer, Mark. "Max and Dave Fleischer." *Film Comment*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Winter, 1975), pp. 48-56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43754885>

Lears, T. J. Jackson. Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.

Lehman, Christopher P. The Colored Cartoon: Black Representation in American Animated Short Films, 1907-1954. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009.

Maltin, Leonard. Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons, Revised and Updated Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987.

Pointer, Ray. The Art and Inventions of Max Fleischer: American Animation Pioneer. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2017.

Sito, Tom. Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of the Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 2006.

Solomon, Charles. Enchanted Drawings: The History of Animation. New York: Knopf, 1989.

## **RESUMES AND LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**

---

Below please find documentation of commitment from the following people:

### **MEDIA TEAM**

- Asaf Galay – Director
- Kathryn Dietz – Writer, Executive Producer
- Helen Dobrowski – Producer, Sarah Colt Productions

### **HUMANITIES ADVISORS**

- Jerry Beck (Film/video, California Institute of the Arts)
- Paul Buhle (History and American civilization, Brown University, retired)
- Kathryn Fuller-Seeley (Radio, television, and film, University of Texas at Austin)
- Carmenita Higginbotham (American art and culture, University of Virginia)
- Amelia (Amy) Holberg (Social science, University of Maryland)
- Mark Langer (Art and culture, Carleton University, Ottawa)
- Christopher Lehman (Ethnic studies, St. Cloud State University)
- Sarah Nilsen (Film and television studies, University of Vermont)
- Tom Sito (Cinema practice, University of Southern California)

### **ADDITIONAL LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

- Mark Fleischer – President, Fleischer Studios
- Sarah Colt – Owner, Sarah Colt Productions

January 7, 2018

National Endowment for the Humanities  
Division of Public Programs  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20506

Dear NEH Panelists:

The cartoon image has power. The attraction of the moving, drawn image, its capacity to inform imagination, is something I discovered as a boy, something that I observe daily in my children.

From a young age, I took special note of the Fleischer Brother's comics, their surrealistic edge, the visual bite of Betty Boop, Popeye and Superman, the jazz music that added texture to the action. These figures presented themselves differently than Mickey Mouse, a difference that any viewer can perceive, if not explain. It would be years before I could learn to describe their alternative style, a vision of human life and bodies that the artists learned from Salvador Dali and Luis Buñuel.

Likewise, years would also pass before I would learn that the creators, Max, Dave, Joe, Charlie and Lou Fleischer were Jewish. As a filmmaker, I am fascinated by the connection between Jewish identity and artistic vision. This is a topic that I have approached through very different angles in my previous films, *The Muses of Isaac Bashevis Singer* and *The Hebrew Superhero*. In this film, *Cartooning America*, I seek to investigate how the Fleischer brothers' social position as ethnic and religious outsiders informed their visual language.

Going beyond the single story of the Fleischer studios, my aim is to make this film about the connection between animation and American society. What if the Fleischer characters had never been overpowered by Walt Disney? What kind of ideas about race, female bodies, and male heroism would have circulated in the United States, thanks to their images?

I would like the alternative vision of the Fleischer Brothers Studios to be known today. This is the right moment to share their story and their work: As more and more parents become critical of the body and personality standards established by Disney, I believe that people will be receptive to the edgy, imaginative world that the Fleischers proposed. They cartooned an America that I would like to live in, and that I would like to make legible for others.

Sincerely,

Asaf Galay

## Curriculum Vitae – Asaf Galay

### **Personal Details**

Name: Asaf Galay

Date of Birth: (b) (6)

Residence:

Email:

Telephone:

### **Education**

Doctoral candidate (PhD) in Yiddish Literature, Bar Ilan University

Master of Arts in Yiddish Literature, Bar Ilan University

### **Documentary Filmmaker – Director / Screenwriter**

2018 *The Adeventues of Saul Bellow* (upcoming)

2018 *Army of Lovers in the Holy Land* ( upcoming)

2017 *If The Dead Could Speak*

2015 *The Hebrew Superhero*

2014 *The Muses of Bashevis Singer*

2012 *Its Okay to be Sentimental* - the poet Nathan Alterman

2010 *Fashion Rules*

2009 *Tel Aviv - Yaffo*

2008 *Gotta Move* – the musician Ehud Banai

2007 *Anti-Semitism: Not What You Thought*

2004 *The Jewish State*

### **Museum Curator**

Beit Hatfutsot – the Museum of the Jewish People

-curator of exhibits on Jewish Humor, Amy Winehouse, Bob Dylan

Beit Shalom Asch

### **Helping the Community**

Leading figure in the revival of Yiddish in Israel including:

Organiser and Founder of the Next Generation for Yiddish cultural and language movement

Co-Designer of the first Yiddish language education program in Israeli state schools outside of the ultra-orthodox system

Kathryn Pierce Dietz

(b) (6)

January 6, 2017

To: NEH Panelists and Staff

I am delighted to confirm my continued involvement as writer and executive producer of “Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story.” Ever since Asaf Galay contacted me to be a part of this project over a year ago, I have had the pleasure of rediscovering the Fleischer films: KoKo the Clown, Betty Boop, Popeye, Superman, and more. I liked them as a child like them even more as an adult! They’re surprisingly clever and funny.

As our humanities advisors have noted, most people don’t know this story at all, and have the mistaken notion that cartooning began with Walt Disney. What a shame! I look forward to helping our team correct this notion, and bring a rollicking story to a new generation of fans. They are in for a treat!

Sincerely,

Kathryn

Kathryn Dietz



## KATHRYN PIERCE DIETZ

(b) (6)

---

### EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

#### ***Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story***

**Current**

I joined the team of this project in the summer of 2016 and wrote the successful NEH development proposal and this current production proposal. Director: Asaf Galay.

#### ***The Adventures of Saul Bellow***

**Current**

I wrote the successful funding proposal for this film by director Asaf Galay, about one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most celebrated authors. It is now in production.

#### ***Reenactress***

**Current**

I consulted on the development phase of this documentary about female civil war reenactors, now awaiting funding from the NEH. Director: J.R. Hardman

#### ***Nasser's Republic: The Making of Modern Egypt***

**2011 – 2015**

I helped raise \$675,000 for this film about one of the Middle East's most influential modern leaders, and oversaw production of a 90-minute festival version and 60-minute PBS version of the film. Director: Michal Goldman

### CREATOR AND EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

#### ***Stories from the Spectrum***

**Current**

I created this series of short films profiling teens and adults on the autism spectrum, and have written, produced and directed two so far: ***The Snow Ball*** (about teen boys planning a prom as part of a skills-building class) and ***Team of Brothers*** (about a teenaged girl who skates on a men's disability hockey team). Two more are currently in production.

### INSTRUCTOR, EDUCATOR, SPEAKER

**Current**

I have taught filmmaking, production management, and other related skill at Emerson College, Tufts University's Ex-College, the Massachusetts College of Art & Design, WGBH Boston's Producer's Workshop, and at film festivals and workshops worldwide.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

#### **Filmmakers Collaborative (FC)**

**2011 –2014**

FC is a national nonprofit established in 1987 to provide grants management and educational programming for filmmakers, and is the nonprofit fiscal sponsor of this project. As its executive I also directed two national "Making Media Now" conferences, and was founding codirector of the **Boston International Kids Film Festival**, now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year.

### PRODUCER | DIRECTOR | WRITER

#### ***Getting Better: 200 Years of Medicine***

**Released 2012**

I produced this 3-part digital series commissioned by the New England Journal of Medicine, and produced, wrote and directed one episode: *Targeting Cancer*.

#### ***Big Little Town: The Story of Needham***

**Released 2012**

I made this 60-minute film to commemorate the 300th anniversary of my town of Needham MA. It is still broadcast locally and has aired multiple times on WGBH Boston as a Fourth of July special. First Place winner in Northeast Video Festival of Community Media.

## **FOUNDING CO-OWNER**

**Ambrica Productions, Inc.**

**1987 – 2009**

I created this NY-based company with a filmmaker colleague, and for 23 years we created documentaries of international scope and interest for PBS. I helped raise over \$8 million in government and foundation grants, managed the funds, and produced the films noted below.

### ***Young & Restless in China***

**Released 2008**

About the values, trials and successes of young Chinese professionals. It premiered theatrically in April 2008, and on PBS/Frontline in June 2008. Winner of Cine Golden Eagle, Hugo Award & Silver Plaque at Chicago International Film Festival, Bronze Telly, and Gold Camera at US International Film & Video Fest.

### ***Mary Pickford***

**Released 2005**

Portrait of silent era film superstar; premiered on PBS/American Experience series in April 2005. Received Cine Golden Eagle, Hugo Award, and World Medal at New York Festivals.

### ***Time of Fear***

**Released 2004**

About Japanese American interment camps in Arkansas during World War II; premiered nationally on PBS in May 2005. Was a special selection at Hot Springs (Arkansas) Documentary Festival.

### ***China in the Red***

**Released 2004**

Shows how ordinary Chinese people raised under the “iron rice bowl” cope with China’s reforms and evolving capitalism. Premiered on PBS/Frontline series in February 2003. Received Cine Golden Eagle, Silver Award and 2 Chris Awards.

### ***Eleanor Roosevelt***

**Released 2000**

Portrait of former first lady premiered on PBS/American Experience series in January 2000 and continues to be shown today. Received Gold Camera, and Chris Award from Columbus International Film & Video Festival.

### ***China: A Century of Revolution***

**Released 1989 - 1997**

This six-hour series on 20<sup>th</sup> century China has won over 20 prizes and awards including Silver and Bronze Apples, Silver Award, Chris Awards, and Red Ribbon from American Film & Video Festival. It consists of three feature-length films:

***China in Revolution: 1911-1949*** (1989)

***The Mao Years: 1949-1976*** (1994)

***Born Under the Red Flag: 1976-1997*** (1997)

## **EDUCATION**

Tufts University, Medford MA

Graduated June 1976 with honors, double-major BA in Philosophy and English.

## **CURRENT AFFILIATIONS**

Tufts University: Visiting Artist, 2015-2018

Tufts University: Alumni Executive Board, Communications & Media Studies since 2013

Babson College: Coaching for Leadership & Teamwork coach since 2015

Helen Ryan Dobrowski

(b) (6)

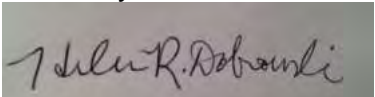
January 3, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter as confirmation of my support and commitment to the *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers* project. During the NEH-funded development stage, I was able to research the ingenuity of the Fleischer brothers, particularly Max, and unravel the reasons behind the timelessness of their animated characters. Their story is a compelling – an immigrant family forging their way in a new and exciting industry, which they in turn advanced, changed, and stamped with their colorful brand of humor. Their animations captured the urban zeitgeist, and are as watchable today as they were in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I look forward to working with Asaf Galay, Kathryn Dietz, and other members of the production team to create this important (and fun) documentary film that will explore the Fleischer brothers, their studio, and their artistry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Helen R. Dobrowski", on a light-colored rectangular background.

Helen Ryan Dobrowski

# Helen Ryan Dobrowski

(b) (6)

---

## PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE

### SARAH COLT PRODUCTIONS, New York, NY

September 2011 – present

#### Producer

- ***Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story***: Performed development work and research for one-hour documentary about a family of artists and inventors who revolutionized animation, currently in submission for production funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- ***The Gilded Age***: Two-hour documentary film that presents a compelling and complex story of one of the most convulsive and transformative eras in American history. National broadcast by AMERICAN EXPERIENCE on PBS on February 6, 2018.
- ***The Cooperators***: 90-minute documentary film currently in development about the tumultuous history of Co-op City, the largest housing development in the United States, with a focus on a massive tenant-led rent strike.

#### Co-producer

- ***Walt Disney***: Four-hour biography film exploring the life of the visionary animator, storyteller and entrepreneur. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and for the AMERICAN EXPERIENCE series. Airdate September 14-15, 2015.
- ***Henry Ford***: Two-hour biography film that explores the life of America's pre-eminent businessman and one of the most influential Americans of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE series. Airdate January 29, 2013.

#### Researcher

- ***Class of '27***: Documentary film series about early childhood care and education and winner of the DuPont Columbia Journalism Award that aired on PBS's *America ReFramed* in September 2016.
- ***JFK***: Four-hour biography film about the 35<sup>th</sup> president of the United States by AMERICAN EXPERIENCE that aired in October 2013.

### STRAIGHT AHEAD PICTURES, INC., Newton, MA

#### Associate Producer

April 2011 – August 2011

- ***Becoming Helen Keller***: Two-hour history and biography film for AMERICAN MASTERS. Airdate TBD.

### SARAH COLT PRODUCTIONS, Brookline, MA

#### Associate Producer

February 2009 – September 2010

- ***God in America: "A Nation Reborn" & "A New Light"***: Two one-hour segments about the history of religion and politics in the United States for a special FRONTLINE & AMERICAN EXPERIENCE series. Airdate October 12, 2010.

#### Production Assistant

April 2008 – January 2009

- ***The Polio Crusade***: One-hour history film about the development of the polio vaccine for AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. Airdate February 2, 2009.

---

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**BOSTON COLLEGE, University Advancement, Chestnut Hill, MA**  
**Marketing & Communications Assistant**

April 2006 – April 2008

**LIQUIDHUB, INC., King of Prussia, PA**  
**IT Help Desk Analyst**

March 2005 – April 2006

---

## EDUCATION

**Boston College, Woods College of Advancing Studies:** Professional Studies, March 2006 – April 2008

**Boston College:** Honors Program, BA *Magna Cum Laude* in Communications

- 2005 Costa-Gavras Social Justice Award, Film Studies Dept
- Awarded Jacques Salmanowitz Program scholarship for documentary film travel to Nicaragua

## JERRY BECK

(b) (6)

9 January 2018

Dear Selection Committee,

I am pleased to serve as an advisor to the documentary film project *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story*. As a professional animation historian, a professor at two universities, and author of fifteen books on this subject, it is clear to me that recognition of the Fleischer Studio is long overdue.

This pioneering film studio is responsible for key technological innovations and cinematic inventions, with firsts in sound techniques and dimensional animation. The studio created the risqué Betty Boop, and brought beloved cartoon characters to life, from Popeye to Superman. It pioneered efforts in hiring women for key roles in production behind the scenes.

The Fleischer story encompasses the story of America's immigrant culture, set against the backdrop of the emerging motion picture industry and the parallel world of print cartooning. It's a story of rags to riches – then back to rags – leaving a legacy of greatness, iconic cinema, and evergreen entertainment.

The team assembled in support of this project is impressive and represents every serious historian of animation, and of the Fleischer Studio in particular; it also includes members of the Fleischer family itself. As envisioned by the production team, this documentary will finally give Disney's greatest rival his due!

This story needs to be told. As animation becomes a dominant force in today's motion picture landscape, its history becomes more important as both an inspiration to today's filmmakers, and stimulation for the next generation animated dreamers.

I look forward to serving on the advisory board for this important film project.

Sincerely yours,

*Jerry Beck*

Jerry Beck  
Professor of Animation History, California Institute of the Arts  
Professor of Animation History, Woodbury University  
President, Asifa-Hollywood – International Animated Film Society



# Jerry Beck

*Curriculum Vitae – October 2017*

(b) (6)

---

**Education:** The School Of Visual Arts, NYC, 1976

## **Academic Employment:**

Adjunct Professor, Animation History, NYU, New York City, 1995

Adjunct Professor, Animation History, Woodbury University, Burbank, CA 2013-2016

Adjunct Professor, Animation History, CalArts, Valencia, CA 2015-2016

## **Professional Employment:**

**2005-2013** – CARTOON RESEARCH – ANIMATION SCOOP - Writer/Publisher of animation history blog

**2005-2013** – CARTOON BREW - Writer/Publisher of animation news blog

**2002-2003** - RUBBERBUG ANIMATION - Writer/Producer of educational series ALGEBRA'SCOOL (direct-to-schools DVD). Produced 90 minutes of animation.

**2001** - KIDSCREEN - West Coast Bureau Chief (trade magazine). Kept in contact with all studio heads and animation creators; extensively wrote & researched kids television programming.

**2000** - COLUMBIA/TRI-STAR INTERNATIONAL - Co-Producer of animation compilation show Totally Tooned In. Programmed classic cartoons: created new interstitial bridging material.

**1999** - WARNER BROS. ANIMATION - Producer/Co-Creator of Karen & Kirby Interstitials for KIDS WB. Worked with staff at Warner Bros. Animation.

**1997- 98** - WALT DISNEY TELEVISION ANIMATION - Producer/Development Exec. Developed new programming featuring classic characters - fulltime consultant to MICKEY MOUSEWORKS.

**1994-1997** - NICKELODEON MOVIES - VP Animation (Development). Developed THE RUGRATS MOVIE, THE STINKY CHEESE MAN and MIGHTY MOUSE.

**1993-94** - HARVEY ENTERTAINMENT - Producer, The Baby Huey Show. Compiled THE HARVEYTOON SHOW for Fox Family & Harvey Entertainment.

**Prior to 1993** I was in film distribution, founding STREAMLINE PICTURES, a distributor of anime.

Also worked for UNITED ARTISTS, ORION CLASSICS, EXPANDED ENTERTAINMENT, and CANNON FILMS.

### **Publications:**

**THE WARNER BROTHERS CARTOONS** Scarecrow Press, 1981

**LOONEY TUNES AND MERRIE MELODIES: A COMPLETE ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE WARNER BROS. CARTOONS** Henry Holt, 1989

**I TAWT I TAW A PUTTY TAT** Henry Holt, 1991

**THE 50 GREATEST CARTOONS** Turner Publishing, 1994

**WARNER BROS. ANIMATION ART** Hugh Lauter Levin, 1997

**OUTLAW ANIMATION** Harry N. Abrams, 2003

**LOONEY TUNES: THE ULTIMATE VISUAL GUIDE** Dorling Kindersley, 2003

**ANIMATION ART** Flametree Publishing, 2004

**PINK PANTHER: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE** Dorling Kindersley, 2005

**THE ANIMATED MOVIE GUIDE** Chicago Review Press, 2005.

**THE ART OF BEE MOVIE** Chronicle Books, 2007

**NOT JUST CARTOONS: NICKTOONS!** Melcher Media, 2007

**THE HANNA BARBERA TREASURY** Insight Editions, 2007

**THE ART OF MADAGASCAR 2** Insight Editions, 2008

**THE 100 GREATEST LOONEY TUNES CARTOONS** Insight Editions, 2010

**THE SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS EXPERIENCE** Insight Editions, 2013

**THE ART OF DREAMWORKS MR. PEABODY AND SHERMAN** Insight Editions, 2014

### **Awards:**

**2007 June Foray Award** for Significant and Benevolent Impact on the Art and Industry of Animation – Annie Awards – Asifa-Hollywood, International Animated Film Society

**2015 Inkpot Award** For Achievement In Animation – San Diego Comic Con



PAUL BUHLE

(b) (6)



(b) (6)

December 18, 2017

A Recommendation to the NEH for Funding

This is a Letter of Commitment to the Cartooning America project.

Public interest in the history of animation, but also in the less-known history of Yiddish-American life and culture, and their massive impact upon American popular culture, has been growing apace for at least the last decade. Thanks to serious scholarship (including the many essays in the three volume *Jews in American Popular Culture*, edited by myself), including scholarly work by those fluent in Yiddish but also lower and lower-middle class Jewish life in the US, c.1890-1940, a far clearer picture has begun to emerge. The immensely creative work of the Fleischers can be seen as parallel to developments in narrative film, popular literature, sports and other areas by similar populations, precursive in many ways to trends in comic art, comedy and even Jewish self-identification in films and television, in later decades up to the present.

This well-organized project has the talent and direction to make something extremely valuable, a learning tool across the generations but also something enjoyable by millions. My own experience with participation in a handful of Jewish Film Festivals, among them Boston, San Francisco and Toronto (several times) is that these provide an especially intensive group, cutting across generations and other categories of Jewish life, and these viewers are certain to receive the documentary with absolute fascination. Documentarian Asaf Galay, with his past successes in these milieux (among others) is perfectly suited for a “hit” here, and en route to much wider audience. Among those, certainly, will be the following of historically-based graphic novels, already fascinated with the Fleischers’ story.

Paul Buhle

Senior Lecturer, Retired

American Studies

Brown University

Co-editor of *Yiddishkeit* (the graphic anthology) with Harvey Pekar among other art comic works.

## Curriculum Vitae

Paul Merlyn Buhle, Retired

(b) (6)

Paul\_Buhle@Brown.edu

Former Senior Lecturer, History and American Civilization, Brown University  
Currently Research Associate, John Nicholas Brown Center, Brown University

### Education

University of Illinois, B.A., 1966

University of Wisconsin, Ph.D., 1975

### Professional Appointments

Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin, 1968–71

Instructor, Cambridge-Godard Graduate School, 1971–73

Director, Oral History of the American Left, Tamiment Library, New York University, 1976–90

Part-Time Faculty, Liberal Arts, Rhode Island School of Design, 1986–93

Visiting Scholar to Senior Lecturer, 1992–2009, American Civilization, Brown University

Distinguished Lecturer, Organization of American Historians, 2004–

Distinguished Lecturer, American Studies Association, 2007–09

### Selected Publications

Editor, *The Labor Joke Book* (St. Louis: Workers Democracy Press, 1985)

Editor, *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work* (London: Allison and Busby, 1986)

Editor, *Popular Culture in America* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minn. Press, 1987)

Editor, *History & the New Left: Madison, Wisconsin, 1950–1970* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1990)

Co-Editor (with Mari Jo Buhle and Dan Georgakas), *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1990)

Co-editor (with Dan Georgakas) *The Immigrant Left in the United States*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996)

*From the Knights of Labor to the New World Order* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1996)

*Tender Comrades: Voices of the Hollywood Blacklistees*. Co-edited with Patrick McGilligan (New York: St. Martins, 1997)

*"A Very Dangerous Citizen": Abraham Lincoln Polonsky and the Hollywood Left* (Berkeley: University of California, 2001)

*Radical Hollywood* (New York: New Press). Co-authored with Dave Wagner.

*Insurgent Images: the Labor Murals of Mike Alewitz* (New York: Monthly Review, 2001)

*The New Left Revisited*, co-edited by John McMillian Temple University Press, 2003

*Hide In Plain Sight: The Hollywood Blacklistees in Film and Television, 1950–2001*. (New York: Palgrave/St. Martins, 2003).

*Blacklisted: The Film Lovers Guide to the Blacklist Film*. (Written with Dave Wagner). (New York: Palgrave/St. Martins, 2003).

*From the Lower East Side to Hollywood: Jews in American Popular Culture*. New York: Verso, 2004.

Coeditor, *The Wobblies: a Graphic History*. (New York: Verso, 2005).

*Tim Hector, a Caribbean Radical's Story*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006).

Editor, *Jews and American Popular Culture* (3 volumes, edited, Westport: Praeger, 2006)

Editor, *A Dangerous Woman: A Graphic Biography of Emma Goldman*. New Press, 2007).

Editor, *TA People's History of the American Empire* (a graphic story version of Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*). (New York: Holt-Metropolitan, 2008. )

Editor, *Che! A Graphic Biography* (New York: Verso, 2008.)

Editor, *Isadora Duncan, a Comic-Art Biography*, by Sabrina Smith. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008.)

Editor, *Students for a Democratic Society, a Comic-Art History*. (New York: Hill and Wang.)

Editor, *The Beats, a graphic history* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009.)

*The Art of Harvey Kurtzman*. Coauthored with Denis Kitchen. (New York: Abrams, 2009)

*Comics in Wisconsin* (Borderland Books/UW, 2009)

*FDR and the New Deal* (For Beginners, 2010), with artist Sabrina Jones.

Co-Editor, *Yiddishkeit* (Abrams, 2011)

#### Major Grants Received

Ford Foundation (1969), National Endowment for the Humanities (1982 and 1984), Rhode Island Committee for the Humanities (1986 and 1990), Harburg Foundation (1995 and 1996), Faculty Grant, Brown University, 2000–2001, Rubin Foundation, 2004

#### Prizes Awarded

*CHOICE* (American Library Association) Scholarly Book Awards, *C.L.R. James' Caribbean* (1993), *The New Left Revisited* (2004)

Will Eisner and Harvey Kurtzman Awards, 2010, for *The Art of Harvey Kurtzman* (2009)

#### Frequent Contributor

*The Nation* (1976–2000, 2010–), *The Village Voice* (1980–96), *Jewish Currents* (1980–present), *The Journal of American History* (1988–present), *Monthly Review* (1981–present), *TIKKUN* (1991–present, Contributing Editor from 2006 onward), columnist for *CNS* [environmentalist journal], (1996–present). Intermittent: *The Guardian* (UK), *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Jewish Forward*, *Rain Taxi: Book Review*.



DEPARTMENT OF RADIO-TELEVISION-FILM  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

1 University Station A0800 • Austin, Texas 78712-0108 • <http://rtf.utexas.edu/>  
512/471-4071 telephone • 512/471-4077 fax • Graduate Office 512/471-3532

Dr. Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley  
William P. Hobby Centennial Professor  
of Media Studies  
Department of Radio-Television-Film  
University of Texas at Austin  
Box A0800  
Austin, TX 78712

December 21, 2017

National Endowment for the Humanities  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington DC 20506

Letter of Support for "Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story" project

I am delighted to add my enthusiastic support to the NEH funding proposal for this outstanding documentary project on the careers of Max Fleischer and his family, and their impact on the development of motion picture cartoons. The Fleischers were among the most important and influential American animators of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and showcasing their achievements and the history of their marvelous characters like Betty Boop, Koko the Clown ("Out of the Inkwell" series) and Popeye will give us new insight into American culture. I am impressed by the superb proposal that executive producer Kathryn Dietz has crafted, for she explores crucial questions of how creative entrepreneurs like the Fleischers actively explored themes of ethnic identity, gender and social class in their careers and in their creations, in a mid-century American culture that was undergoing rapid (and wrenching) transformations. No other documentary has quite accomplished this yet, and I think it is sorely needed.

I believe that this smart, well-structured proposal examines a rich, yet previously-understudied aspect of US entertainment history. Not enough academic studies of animation, the film industry and histories of popular culture have looked beyond Walt Disney to explore the rich visual culture created by the era's other cartoons and their characters. What this proposal so rightly argues is for the importance and influence of Max Fleischer and his brothers. Their technical innovations made film cartoons more lifelike, complex and popular than ever. They turned an art form into a successful business, and accomplished this just at the point in the growth of film exhibition where cartoons became central to the structure of the Classical Age of Hollywood's complete "night at the cinema" moviegoing package.

The script importantly argues that Fleischers saw the opportunity to translate the popularity of newspaper comic strips and visual 19<sup>th</sup> century toys to the movie screen, making the most labor-intensive of all motion picture forms. Using new techniques of production and management adapted from Taylorism, the Fleischers built an animated cartoon empire. This move came with challenges and compromises, as the artistic content was fractured into work completed by scores of low-paid animators (often immigrants and women) who on the one hand got valuable experience in the growing world of animation, but who on the other were supremely frustrated at long hours, low pay and almost no credit for their hard work. Like studio executives in Hollywood, the Fleischers struggled to balance art and commerce, control and creativity in a time of volatile industrial relations.

I am impressed how persuasively this documentary argues for the cultural impact of the famous cartoons characters that Max Fleischer and his family created (particularly Betty Boop, and the film adaptation of Popeye). These characters were perfect heroes for the Great Depression of the 1930s, and their popularity fully-rivaled that of Mickey Mouse and Shirley Temple. Betty Boop was unique, a female lead character in her own cartoons. Betty embodied a combination of the new behavioral freedoms of 1920s flappers (with her form fitting outfits, flirtatious ways and "boop-a-doop" voice) with the adventurous, sexy spirit of Pre-Code 1930s film heroines, as she shared screen time with young actresses like Barbara Stanwyck, Claudette Colbert, Bette Davis and the other spunky heroines of Hollywood films. Combining glamour and action, Betty was never the helpless damsel in distress, but she got herself in and back out of trouble with the best of the



sprightly stars. Popeye too, was a huge star in the Fleischer animation universe, the scrappy, salty-voiced sailor, the All-American wisecracker, who never let his small size deter him from fighting off the evil Bluto to save his sweetheart, the quirky Olive Oyl. And wow did he sell canned spinach to a resistant young population of moviegoing kids! The movies were so central to popular culture in the tough times of the Depression, and the Fleischer cartoons, distributed through the Paramount film corporation to theaters across the nation, brought laughter and encouragement to the people.

The project producers have done an excellent job of incorporating top academic scholars working in the forefront of current studies of animation, film, gender and ethnic/Jewish identity studies. In this new work, scholars are not only analyzing the content of programs, but are also examining the impact of creative entrepreneurship, biography, star personae, advertising and publicity paratexts and other knowledge that audiences and fans brought with them when they watched the programs. That is the kind of scholarship I see this proposal using so effectively to illuminate the Fleischers' contributions in new ways.

This excellent historical documentary project is just the kind of program I would love to see on TV and to have to use with my college courses in film and American cultural history. It will open new discussion and exploration of the Fleischers', and animation's historical significance, educating younger audiences today to understand the roots of the entertainment in which they are so immersed, as well as to learn new lessons about creativity and character creation. I would be delighted to assist the production team in any way I can as a consultant, with advice and contextual input from my research on film exhibition and moviegoing history, radio comedy and popular entertainment, and cultural history of the 1920s and 1930s.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn H Fuller-Seeley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathryn H Fuller-Seeley  
William P. Hobby Centennial Professor of Media Studies

December 2017

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name: DR. KATHRYN H. FULLER-SEELEY**

**Rank: PROFESSOR, William P. Hobby Centennial Chair**

**Department: Radio-Television-Film, University of Texas at Austin**

**Email: kathy.fullerseeley@austin.utexas.edu**

### EDUCATION

Ph.D.	Johns Hopkins University	American history	May 1993
M.A.	Johns Hopkins University	American history	May 1990
B.A.	Agnes Scott College	History (with high honor)	June 1982

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

William P. Hobby Professor of Communication, RTF Dept, UT-Austin		Sept2015-present
Professor, Radio-Television-Film	University of Texas at Austin	Aug 2013-Aug 2015
Professor, Communication	Georgia State University	Mar 2009-May 2013
Associate Professor, Comm.,	Georgia State University	Aug 2003-March 2009
Associate Professor, History	Virginia Commonwealth University	May 2000- May 2003
Assistant Professor, History	Virginia Commonwealth University,	Aug 1994 – May2000
V.Asst Prof. Media & Am Studies	Hampshire College	Aug 1992—May 1994
Instructor, Women's Studies Prog.	Johns Hopkins University	Spring 1992

### HONORS, AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship	for University Teachers	2013
Outstanding Young Alumna Award	Agnes Scott College	2000
Smithsonian Pre-Doctoral Fellowship	National Museum of American History	1989-1990
Phi Beta Kappa	Agnes Scott College	1982

### INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS --- BOOKS

*Jack Benny and the Golden Age of American Radio Comedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017).

*One Thousand Nights at the Movies: An Illustrated History of Motion Pictures, 1895-1915*, co-authored by Q. David Bowers and Kathryn H. Fuller-Seeley (Atlanta: Whitman Publishing, 2013).

*Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, ed. Kathryn Fuller-Seeley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

*Celebrate Richmond Theater*, with photos edited by Elizabeth Dementi and Wayne Dementi (Richmond VA: Dietz Press, 2001).

*At the Picture Show: Small Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996; rpt. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

*Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy*, co-authored by Garth Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie and Kathryn H. Fuller (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

## RECENT BOOK CHAPTERS AND JOURNAL ARTICLES

“Using Historical Methods to Explore Fan Cultures of the Past,” in *Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Suzanne Scott and Melissa Clark, (New York: Routledge, 2017), 45-56.

“How Jack Benny and Harry Conn Stumbled onto the Formula for Situation Comedy,” *Humanities* 38:3, Summer 2017  
<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2017/summer/feature/how-jack-benny-and-harry-conn-stumbled-the-formula-situation-comedy>

“‘Well!’ Jack Benny’s Unperformative Performance in his Transition from Radio to Television,” *Journal of Film and Video*, 68: 3-4, Fall/Winter 2016, p 18-29.

“Hollywood Goes to Harlem: Eddie Anderson’s Stardom,” *Cinephile* 11:2, Spring 2016, p 4-7.

“Becoming Benny: The Evolution of Jack Benny’s Character Comedy from Vaudeville to Radio,” *Studies in American Humor*, 1:2, Fall 2015, p 163-191.

“Dish Night at the Movies: Exhibitors and Female Audiences during the Great Depression,” (2007) reprinted in Eric Smoodin and Jon Lewis, eds., *The American Film History Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2015), p 170-188.

“The Dogs Who Saved Hollywood: Strongheart and Rin Tin Tin,” co-authored with Jeremy Groskopf. in *Cinematic Canines: Dogs and Their Work in the Fiction Film*, ed. Adrienne L. McLean (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), pp. 54-77.

“Local Promotion of a ‘Picture Personality’: A Case Study of the Vitagraph Girl,” in *Watching Films: New Perspectives on Moviegoing, Exhibition and Reception*, ed. Karina Aveyard and Albert Moran (London: Intellect Books, 2013), pp. 103-120.

“Storefront Theatre Advertising and the Evolution of the American Film Poster,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Early Cinema*. Ed. Andre Gaudreault. (New York: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 398-419.

“Shirley Temple: Dreams Come True” in *Glamour in a Golden Age: Movie Stars of the 1930s*. Ed. Adrienne L. McLean. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011), pp.44-65.

### Filmed Interview and NEH/PBS Project Scholar participation

“Saving Brinton,” (2017); Northland Films, produced and directed by Andrew Sherburne and John Richard. 120 mins. I was interviewed extensively, and appear on screen for 10 minutes in this documentary exploring the efforts of Iowa teacher Mike Zahs to preserve the 120 year old Brinton Collection of early cinema and rural Midwestern itinerant film exhibition. World premiere at AFI Docs festival in Washington DC, June 26, 2017.

“Bob Hope” PBS/American Masters production. Received NEH grants in 2015-2017. Project Scholar, contributing research and editorial content to the script and final video documentary.

January 2, 2018

National Endowment for the Humanities  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20506

Dear NEH Panelists:

I write to offer my enthusiastic support of the project, “Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story,” by executive producer/writer Kathryn Dietz and director Asaf Galay. It is a timely project as it considers the history and impact of popular media in the United States. Importantly, “Cartooning America” adds to critical intellectual conversations about the fashioning and maintenance of American identities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the impact of mass entertainment for mainstream audiences. The project works through themes such as gender and feminism, race, and Jewish cultural identity to examine how this influential producer of 1930s cartoons affected audiences’ interpretations of urban society, of sexuality, of censorship and cultural decorum, and of belonging — all through the use of humor and music. It was cartoons in the early decades of film that told the story of the United States *to* the United States. They maintained significant cultural power as they communicated with audiences, both visually and aurally, the country’s past, present, and future. Cartoons made people laugh as much as they made people think, and the Fleischer Brothers were instrumental in that process. The Fleischers helped to craft how animation could function as a powerful voice influencing mainstream society, and we see their comedic and aesthetic imprint on visual material that ranges from classic Hollywood cinema to Looney Tunes cartoons to *The Simpsons*.

The Fleischer’s Brothers are key to the history of American animation, and “Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story,” in particular, will share with viewers the significance of these pioneers. This project not only will address the key cultural markers that shaped the Fleischer’s brand of comedy, it will offer an important narrative about the United States, the creativity of early-20<sup>th</sup> century cartoons and cartoonists, and the cultural construction of the nation through animated material. It is a project that adds significantly to the humanities.

Sincerely,



Carmenita Higginbotham  
Associate Professor  
McIntire Department of Art  
Program in American Studies  
University of Virginia



**Carmenita D. Higginbotham**  
**Curriculum Vitae**

P.O. Box 400130  
University of Virginia  
Charlottesville, VA 22904-4130  
(434) 924-6131

(b) (6)

---

**Current Position:** Associate Professor, McIntire Department of Art, 2013-present  
Program in American Studies  
Assistant Professor, McIntire Department of Art, 2005-2013  
Program in American Studies  
Affiliated Faculty, Carter G. Woodson Center of African American and African Studies, 2005-present  
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA

**Research/Teaching Interests:** American Art, 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century American art and culture, urban and popular culture, film studies, critical race and ethnic studies

**Education**

**Ph.D., University of Michigan,** History of Art, 2005

**M.A., University of Massachusetts, Amherst,** Art History: American Art and Culture, 1997

**B.A., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis,** English and Art History, 1994

**Publications**

*The Urban Scene: Race, Reginald Marsh and American Art*, Penn State University Press (2015).  
“Edward Hopper and Whiteness,” in *Hopper’s Hotels*. Exh. cat. Richmond, VA: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, (forthcoming, 2019).  
“Bill ‘Bojangles’ Robinson,” “Romare Bearden,” and “Lena Horne,” *The Encyclopedia of African America Culture*. ABC-CLIO, (forthcoming, 2018).  
(Review) *Birth of an Industry: Blackface Minstrelsy and the Rise of American Animation* by Nicholas Sammond (Duke UP, 2015), for *The Journal of Southern History* (May 2017).  
“American Impressionism,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*. Routledge (2016).  
“To the Lynching,” *The Brooklyn Rail: Critical Perspectives on Arts, Politics and Culture* (June 2015).  
“Michael Eisner,” *100 Entertainers Who Changed America*, Vol. 1, ABC-CLIO (2013): 190-96.  
“Reginald Marsh, Harlem, And the Art of Slumming,” *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 82 (October 2008).

**Awards/Fellowships/Honors**

Faculty Research Grant for the Arts (co-recipient with Maggie Guggenheimer, Virginia Foundation for the Humanities), Project: *Site Unseen*, 2018 – University of Virginia  
Inaugural Arts Faculty Fellow, College of Arts and Sciences, 2016-17 – University of Virginia  
Faculty Research Fellowship (Summer), 2012, 2013, 2016 – University of Virginia  
IMP Society Faculty Award, 2010 – University of Virginia  
Teaching Resource Center Fellowship Program Recipient, 2008-09 – University of Virginia  
Faculty Fellowship (with filmmaker Kevin Everson), 2007-08 (extended 08-09) – University of Virginia  
Faculty Research Fellowship (Spring and Summer), 2007 – University of Virginia  
Professional Development Fellowship, Wyeth Endowment for American Art, 2004-06 – College Art Association  
Chester Dale Fellowship, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, 2003-04 – National Gallery of Art

## **Film**

*American Motor Company* (2010). Film. Co-directed with Kevin Jerome Everson. Recent exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), NY, 2015.

On-air consultant/scholar, *Le Story de Disney: la magie musicale* (2016). Documentary Film. Produced by Canal 8/CSTAR, France. Aired on C8.

On-air consultant/scholar, *Walt Disney* (2015). Documentary Film. Directed by Sarah Colt. Produced by *American Experience*/WGBH. Aired on PBS (Public Broadcasting System).

Actor (voice over). *Identified Flying Object* (2017). Film. Directed by Kevin Everson. Recent exhibitions include the Princeton University, 2017.

Actor (voice over). *According To* (2009). Film. Directed by Kevin Everson. Recent exhibitions include the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY, 2011; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 2011.

## **Selected Conference Papers and Invited Lectures (2014-present)**

“George Biddle, Art, and Reinventing the City,” June 2017, University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS.

“Disney Culture,” April 2017, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

“Celluloid Heroism and the Joan of Arc Effect,” March 2017, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

“All Quiet on the Western Front,” “Alfred Hitchcock’s, *Notorious*,” “American Film Noir Meets *The Lady From Shanghai*,” “True Grit: An Authentic Experience,” 2016-2017, Charlottesville, VA.

“Why We Can’t Let Disney Go,” June 2016, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC.

*Jacob Lawrence Symposium*, April 2016, University of Virginia, VA.

“Lynching, Politics, and the Spectacle of Race, Reginald Marsh circa 1934,” April 2016, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA.

“Girl Watching and the Problem of Race in the Art of Reginald Marsh,” October 2015, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

“American Experience: Disney,” October 2015, WGBH (PBS), Boston, MA.

“Race at Home: Black Bodies, Servitude and 1930s American Painting,” June 2015, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN.

“Work, Race and ‘The City’: Thomas Hart Benton and the Great Depression,” October 2014, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA.

“The Princess and the Frog: Disney and Black Animation” March 2014, Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, Charlottesville, VA.

## **Selected Curatorial Experience**

Exhibition Co Curator, *Charlottesville Collects: African American Art*, July 2007-August 2007  
University of Virginia Art Museum, Charlottesville VA.

Graduate Curatorial Internship, *The Art of Romare Bearden*, September 2002-July 2003  
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Department of Special Projects in Modern Art

Curatorial Assistant, 2000-2001  
International Center of Photography, New York, NY  
Exhibition Projects: *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self* (December 2003); Carrie Mae Weems, *The Hampton Project*; James VanDerZee; Robert Capa and John Steinbeck

## **Professional Organizations**

College Art Association

Association of Historians of American Art

Southeast College Art Conference (SECAC)

Space Between Society (Literature and Culture 1914-45)



Amelia Holberg

(b) (6)

December 18, 2017

Kathryn Dietz and Asaf Galay

Dear Kathryn and Asaf,

I am happy to offer my commitment to the film *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers' Story* and I am looking forward to participating as an advisor, subject matter expert, and in any other capacity outlined in this proposal.

I encourage the NEH to accept this proposal and fund the production generously. The Fleischer Brothers' technological innovations in animation turned what had been a motion-picture novelty into a serious narrative art form, and essentially created the possibility for the international animation industry we see today.

The Fleischers have been neglected in American film history, both in print and in documentary, overlooked beside the juggernaut that is Walt Disney Studios. In their heyday in the 1920s and 30s, however, the Fleischers were direct, equal competitors, whose cartoons reflected American life in its complex realities in contrast to Disney's appeal to childhood and idealism. Trends in American animation today, which have reclaimed the form for adult viewers, find their closest historical antecedents in the Fleischer films. The surreal, despondent Bojack Horseman, living in a parallel, interspecies Los Angeles while processing the wages of fame, inhabits the same conceptual world as Betty Boop and the Fleischers' famous guest stars rendered into animation. There is evidence of increased interest in the Fleischers, including a recent book by animation professional Ray Pointer. This film, *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers' Story*, would bring their story to a much wider American audience, and help to fill in a major gap in the history of animation as an American art form.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amelia Holberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Amelia" being more prominent than the last name "Holberg".

Amelia S. Holberg, Ph.D.  
Adjunct Professor, University of Maryland University College

**Education:**

UC Berkeley

**Ph.D. Department of Rhetoric, May 2000**

Dissertation: "Exhibiting Jewishness: Contemporary Jewish Identity, History, and Visual Narrative"

Committee: Kaja Silverman (chair), Judith Butler, Michael Rogin (deceased)

**M.A. Department of Rhetoric, May 1996**

**B.A. (Honors) Program in Film Studies (minor: Latin), May 1994**

**Areas of Specialization and research interests:**

Media Studies; Rhetoric, Visual Culture; Film History and Theory; International Art Cinema; Cultural Studies; Jewish Culture; Museum Studies; Religion and Media; Psychoanalytic Theory; Feminist Theory

**Academic Appointments:**

- **Adjunct Professor University of Maryland University College (Stateside), 2012-present**
- **Adjunct Instructor, The Catholic University of America, 2011**
- **Collegiate Associate Professor of Communications, Arts, and Humanities, University of Maryland University College (Asia Division, Korea), 2008-9; Adjunct 2009-2011**
- **Visiting Colleague in American Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, 2007-2008**
- **Assistant Professor, tenure-track, The Catholic University of America, 2001-2007**
- **Lecturer, San Francisco State University, 2000-2001**
- **Lecturer, UC Santa Cruz, 2000-2001**
- **Instructor (Graduate and post-Graduate), UC Berkeley, 1994-2001**
- **Instructor, De Anza-Foothill Community College, 2000**

**Publications:**

**"Home on the Range: The Cowboy and the Noodle Chef,"** *Journal of English and American Studies*, vol. 7, December 2008.

**"Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen, by Henry Bial"** (book review) *American Jewish History*, (Summer 2008)

**"Who Knew?"** *Lilith Magazine*, Spring 2004.

**"Bubbe Boop,"** *Entertaining America*, exhibition catalogue, The Jewish Museum, Jeffrey Shandler and Jim Hoberman, eds. New York: The Jewish Museum, 2003.

**"Betty Boop: Yiddish Film Star,"** *American Jewish History*. vol. 87, no. 4, December 1999.

**"Father, Son, and Holy Torum, dir. Mark Soosaar"** (film note). *San Francisco International Film Festival Guide*. San Francisco Film Society, 1998.

**"Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter, by Jo Anna Isaak"** (book review), *Puncture*. no. 40, Fall 1997.

**"Paper Heads, dir. Dusan Hanak"** (film note). *San Francisco International Film Festival Guide*. San Francisco Film Society, 1997.

**"Women of the Beat Generation, edited by Brenda Knight"** (book review). *Puncture*. no.38, early 1997.

**"The Dustbin of History, by Greil Marcus"** (book review). *Puncture*. no.35, Spring 1996.

**"Recasting Autobiography: Women's Counterfictions in Contemporary German Literature and Film, by Barbara Kosta"** (book note), *Film Quarterly*. vol. 49, no. 3, Spring 1996

**Conference/Colloquia papers:**

**"Home on the Range: The Cowboy and the Noodle Chef"**

Ewha Women's University, Seoul, Korea, November 2008

**"Jewish Cultural Tourism: Site-Specific Wandering"**

University of Hawaii at Manoa, October 2007

2005 FSU Film and Literature Conference, Tallahassee, January 2005

**“The Possibilities of Nothing”**

Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Minneapolis, March 2003

**“Contemporary Female Artists Reconsider the Shtetl”**

Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, December 2000

**“Rethinking Nostalgia and Exoticism: Contemporary American Jewish Cinema”**

Rhetoric Department Colloquium, Berkeley, April 2000

**“Faith and Freedom: Women in the Shtetl in Eleanor Antin's *The Man Without a World*”**

Popular Culture/American Culture Association, New Orleans, April 2000

**“Eleanor Antin, Peter Forgacs, and the Fantasy of Fieldwork in the Shtetl”**

Society for Cinema Studies, Chicago, March 2000

**“Women of Valor: Contemporary Female Artists Reconsider the Shtetl”**

20th Century Literature Conference, St. Louis, February 2000

**“Looking Back to Find the Present: Eleanor Antin's ‘Vilna Nights’ and the Jewish Museum of New York”**

Association for Jewish Studies, Chicago, December 1999

**“Film, Installation, and Jewish Identity: The Three Dimensions of Chantal Akerman's *D'est*”**

Society for Cinema Studies, West Palm Beach, FL, April 1999

**“Betty Boop: Yiddish Film Star”**

Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, December 1998

**“Shayne Maidel: Yiddishkeit, the Fleischers and Betty Boop”**

Third Scholar's Conference on American Jewish History; Hebrew Union College, June 1998

**“Shayne Maidel: Yiddishkeit, the Fleischers and Betty Boop”**

Society for Cinema Studies, San Diego, March 1998

**“The Essence of Orlando”**

The Southern Comparative Literature Association, U. of Georgia, September 1997

**“From Femmes Fatales to Damsels in Distress: Fashion in Film Noir”**

The Style Conference, Bowling Green University, July 1997

**“The Mass Ornament in Kracauer and *Metropolis*”**

Society for Cinema Studies, Ottawa, ON, May 1997

**“Oy! Such as You Never Saw: Betty Boop, the Fleischers, and the Lower East Side”**

Cinema of Animation Conference; UC Berkeley, April 1996

**“In Motion: Maya Deren, Film, Dance, and Identity”**

Symposium on Maya Deren; San Francisco State University, March 1996

**“The American Jewish Community and Critical Race Theory”**

Rhetoric Department Colloquium, UC Berkeley, February 1996

**“Nature Penetrated by Reason: Kracauer's “The Mass Ornament” and *Metropolis*”**

German Department Colloquium, UC Berkeley, November 1995

**Invited lectures, community events, etc.:**

**“Hollywood and War: a Complex Relationship”**

March 6, 2009 and May 8, 2009, UMUC Presents (Osan AFB and USAG Yongsan)

**“Controversial Media in the Classroom”**

November, 2008, Triennial Korea-wide Faculty Meeting

**“The Fleischer Brothers, Animation, and American Jewish Culture”**

January 10, 2007, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio

**“Betty Boop's Yiddish Roots”**

May 7, 2006, Toronto Jewish Film Festival

**“Modern Fantasy: the World of Betty Boop”**

July 31, 2005, National Yiddish Book Center (Amherst, MA)

**“In and Out: The Jewish Museum Today”**

June 2, 2003, The Jewish Museum of Maryland (Baltimore, MD)

**“Shayne Maidel: The Jewish Story of Betty Boop”**

August 8, 1999, Berkeley Hadassah Young Women's Group

**Pacific Film Archives (Berkeley, CA) series The Way We Wore: Fashion in Cinema**

July/August 2008 (3 lectures)

**Rossmore Retirement Community Lectures on Jewish Film**

1993, 1996, 1997

Amelia Sharon Holberg

Page 2 of 2

Mark Langer  
Associate Research Professor  
Carleton University  
1125 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa, ON, Canada. K1S 5B6

9 January 2018

Dear Asaf Galay and Kathryn Dietz:

I am writing to you to indicate my commitment to the *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story* documentary film. A project of this sort is long overdue in my estimation. The Fleischer Brothers, particularly Max and Dave, made major contributions to the development of animation technology, and the development of mass entertainment in America, but also in the development of the multi-cultural and urbanized culture that typifies America today.

For decades, much of the story of the development of the animation industry was the story of rivalry between two major studios. On the east coast, there was Fleischer Studios, Inc., the leading proponent of what has become known as the East Coast or New York style of animation. In New York style, the artificiality of the drawn characters was emphasized. Ethnic and working class characters were predominant. West Coast style, seen most strongly at Walt Disney Productions, aimed toward naturalism, where the audience was encouraged to see the characters as real. Films were commonly set in small town or rural environments and were populated with middle class or farm workers. Disney's Mickey Mouse may have begun as a deck hand on a river boat, but eventually appeared as an exemplar of an upwardly mobile middle class employed in a minor managerial or professional capacity. In contrast, the Fleischer's Popeye began as a deck hand, and remained so.

Much West Coast animation reflected a Protestant sense of morality more typical of rural or small-town backgrounds. While New York style films often reveled in risqué behavior, West Coast style films were invested with normative ideological meanings, endorsing middle-class values. Moral homilies aimed at younger viewers were common in these pictures, such as Snow White's counsel to "whistle while you work", in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, or the hard-working pig's adage "I'll be safe and you'll be sorry, when the wolf comes to your door" in *The Three Little Pigs*.

New York animated films were far less likely to demonstrate moral homilies and portrayed adult human characters dealing with real-life problems revolving around employment, sexuality, gender, and death. Popeye, Betty Boop and other Fleischer characters inhabited gritty working class neighborhoods, frequented bars, nightclubs and other urban locales, much like those of the urban neighborhoods where the Fleischers and most of their staff originated, unlike the Disney settings that strongly resembled to Walt's childhood home town of Marceline.

I see the Fleischer Studios Inc. as representing a cultural side of America that is very much with us today. After the recent U.S. election, it is easy to see this split between East and West coast styles as one that speaks very much to the America of 2017. The Fleischer Studios were an important part not only of this cultural dynamic, but also of the development of modern mass media.

Max Fleischer's background was in newspaper cartooning, beginning with his being at 16 the youngest cartoonist on a major American daily with his own strips. Dave Fleischer's career began as a clown in the Coney Island amusement park. Later, he worked in vaudeville. Together the Fleischers adapted conventions of these earlier amusements into the modern mass medium of cinema, drawing on earlier characters and comic conventions (such as vaudeville's "two-act"). So, the Fleischer story is not only that of broader American culture, but also a key part of the narrative and thematic conventions of modern American media.

The brothers also developed technology that would form the basis of much media to follow. They invented the rotoscope, which allowed live-action figures to form the basis of animation, making possible smoother, life-like movement. They invented the rotograph, which allowed the easy combination of live-action and animation in the same shot. They developed an early three-dimensional process to allow greater depth of the cinema image, and made the first sound-on-film animated films, years before Disney. Their contribution to the technological development of the animation industry is unrivalled.

The Fleischer's loss of their studio at the end of 1941 was the culmination of a long-standing drama in itself. This drama includes the hopes of an immigrant family in the New World, their belief in technological progress (the whole Fleischer family were inventors), their upward progress, with failures caused by business errors, betrayals, and ultimately a family feud) and is a story that speaks not only to American history, but the real experiences of so many potential viewers.

I think that this project is long overdue, and one with which I would wholeheartedly devote myself. You have my full co-operation.

Best regards,

Mark Langer

## MARK LANGER CURRICULUM VITAE

### Education

M.Phil.	Film, Columbia University 1978
M.F.A.	Film, Columbia University 1974
B.A.	History, University of Western Ontario 1971

### Employment

#### **a) Academic Employment**

2013-	Adjunct Research Professor, Film Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa.
1986-2013	Associate Professor, Film Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa.
1977-86	Assistant Professor, Film Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa.

### Publications

#### **Books and Monographs**

Max & Dave Fleischer: da "Ko-Ko the Clown" a "Superman." (Venice: Arsenale Cooperative Editrice, 1980) Translated by Luc Fontana.

#### **Articles in Refereed Journals – 16, including**

"Geanimeerde Freaks, Cyborgs en Rotoscopie: De animatie in de schemerzone tussen biologie en technologie," Plateau. Vol. 20 no. 4 (1999): 14-18.

"Polyphony, Heterogeneity and New York Style in Early Fleischer Films," Persistence of Vision. no. 13 (1997), pp. 65-87.

"Why the Atom Is Our Friend: Disney, General Dynamics and the USS *Nautilus*," Art History. Vol. 18 no. 1 (March 1995), pp. 63-96.

"The Fleischer Rotoscope Patent," Animation Journal. Vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring 1993), pp. 66-78.

"Organizational Power and the Fleischer Studios: The *Standard Production Reference*," Cinema Journal. Vol. 30, no. 2 (Winter 1991), pp. 4-22.



### **Chapters in Books – 22, including**

“Hicks Lokey” in Didier Ghez (ed.) Walt’s People. (London: Xlibris, 2015), pp.161-180.

“Ko-Ko the Clown,” in Catherine A. Surowiec (ed.) Le Giornate del Cinema Muto. (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 2013), pp. 139- 144.

“The Disney-Fleischer Dilemma: Product Differentiation and Technological Innovation,” in Stephen Neale (ed.) The Classical Hollywood Reader. (London: Routledge, 2012)

“Polyphony, Heterogeneity and New York Style in Early Fleischer Films,” in Charlie Keil and Daniel Goldmark (eds) Vaudeville and Cinema. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp.29-50.

### **Articles in Non-refereed Journals and Miscellaneous Scholarly Publications – 28, including**

Silent Animation Preserved by the UCLA Film and Television Archives: Historical Overview. Beta version April 2010. <http://animation.library.ucla.edu/> .

“Birth of the Boop: Some Thoughts on Animation and Live-Action Stardom,” The Society for Animation Studies Newsletter. Vol. 18 no. 1 (Winter 2005): 9-14.

### **Book Reviews in Scholarly Journals - 15**

#### **Journalistic Writing – 108, including**

Commentator in and advisor to an episode of the Arts & Entertainment program "Biography" on Betty Boop, 14 February 1996, 8 - 9 pm EST

#### **Papers Presented To Learned Societies - 58 To Other Academic Bodies – 39 including**

“The Fleischer Studios, Inc. and American Jewish Culture,” American Jewish Historical Society, Institute for Jewish History, N.Y., 29 August 2005

#### **Papers Presented to Non-Academic Organizations - 21**

**Film Exhibitions and Retrospectives Curated 34 internationally, at institutions such as The Museum of Modern Art (NY), La Cinematheque Francaise, Museum of the Moving Image (NY), Los Angeles County Museum, and numerous film festivals.**

**Christopher P. Lehman**

(b) (6)

[cplehman@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:cplehman@stcloudstate.edu)

December 20, 2017

To the National Endowment for the Humanities:

I write in enthusiastic support of the film project *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story*. I am proud to have been asked to offer my knowledge of the brothers' studio and their films, and I look forward to contributing however I may to the project. The filmmakers are dedicated to exploring several aspects of the Fleischers' art, including some rarely examined discussions of ethnicity and gender in film content and film distribution. The project promises to be a significant addition to the historiographies of American animation and American film history, at the very least.

Sincerely,

Dr. Christopher Lehman

Professor and Chair, Ethnic & Women's Studies Department, St. Cloud State University  
Recipient, NEH Summer Fellowship, DuBois Institute, Harvard University, 2011

# CHRISTOPHER P. LEHMAN

Ethnic & Women's Studies Dept., St. Cloud State University, 720 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. S., St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498 \* (320) 308-5217 \* cplehman@stcloudstate.edu

**AREA OF SPECIALIZATION:** 20<sup>th</sup> century African-American history with the subfield Cultural history.

## EDUCATION/ PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

**University of Massachusetts**, Amherst, MA -- *M.A. and Ph.D., Afro-American Studies* (May 2002)

**University of Massachusetts**, Amherst, MA -- *M.A., History* (May 1997)

**Oklahoma State University**, Stillwater, OK -- *B.A. with Honors, History* (May 1995)

## HONORS & FELLOWSHIPS

**Harvard University**, Cambridge, MA -- Visiting Fellow, W.E.B. DuBois Institute, NEH Summer Institute, "African American Struggles for Freedom and Civil Rights, 1865-1965" (Jun.-Jul. 2011)

**Council on Black Minnesotans** -- *Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholarship in Social Justice Award* -- (2008)

*Who's Who Among American Teachers & Educators* -- Inclusion -- (2006-Present)

**St. Cloud State University**, St. Cloud, MN -- *Multicultural Student Services' Teacher of the Year Award* -- (2005)

**University of Massachusetts**, Amherst, MA -- *Graduate Student Travel Grant* (1998, 1999), *Afro-American Studies Fellowship/Assistantship* (1997-2002), *Office of Graduate Student Recruitment & Retention Fellowship/Assistantship* (1997-2002)

**Oklahoma State University**, Stillwater, OK -- *Phi Kappa Phi Graduation Honors* (1995), *General Honors Award* (1994), *Homer L. Knight Undergraduate Award* (1993-1994), *Thurgood Marshall Scholarship for Continuing Students* (1992-1993), *Phi Eta Sigma* (1992), *State Regents Scholarship* (1991-1995), *Regents Distinguished Scholarship* (1991-1995)

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**St. Cloud State University**, St. Cloud, MN

Chair, Ethnic and Women's Studies Dept. (Fall 2014-Present)

Full Professor, Ethnic Studies Dept. (Summer 2010-Present)

Interim Chair, Ethnic Studies Dept. (Fall 2009-Spring 2010)

Associate Professor, Ethnic Studies Dept. (Summer 2007-Summer 2010)

Director of the African American Studies Minor (Fall 2006-Present)

Initiated and facilitated development of the African American Studies Minor (Fall 2005)

Faculty Advisor, Council of African American Students (Fall 2003-Spring 2009, Fall 2015-Present)

Assistant Professor, Ethnic Studies Dept. (Fall 2002-Summer 2007)

Courses Created and Taught: *Major Works in Af.-Am. Studies*, *African American Cultural Expressions*, *Intro. To African American Studies*

Course Taught:

*Intro. To Ethnic Studies*

**American International College**, Springfield, MA: Adjunct Professor, Continuing Education Dept. (Summer 2001)

Course Taught: *US History to 1877*

**Eastern Connecticut State University**, Willimantic, CT: Adjunct Professor, History Dept. (Spring 2001-Spring 2002)

Courses Taught: *Recent US History*; *Civil Rights Movement*

**Western New England College**, Springfield, MA: Adjunct Professor, History & Government Dept. (Fall 2000-Spring 2002)

Courses Created and Taught: *20<sup>th</sup> Century African-American History*, *Civil Rights Movement*

**Bay Path College**, Longmeadow, MA: Adjunct Professor, Continuing Education Division (Summer 2000-Spring 2001)

Course Taught: *Civil Rights Movement*; *U. S. History, 1865-1945*; *The United States since 1870*; *The United States to 1870*

**University of Massachusetts**, Amherst, MA: Teaching Assistant, Afro-American Studies Dept. (1999-2002)

Courses Taught: *A History of the Civil Rights Movement*; *Introduction to African Studies*; Instructor, *Civil War to 1954*, Continuing Education Division; Teaching Assistant, *African History*, History Dept.



## BOOKS

*Power, Politics, and the Decline of the Civil Rights Movement: A Fragile Coalition, 1967-1973*, Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014

*Slavery in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1787-1865*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2011;

**Part of the 2013 Choice e-Collection for African American Studies**

*A Critical History of Soul Train on Television*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2008

*The Colored Cartoon: Black Representation in American Animated Short Films, 1907-1954*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007;

**A Choice Outstanding Academic Title for 2008**

*American Animated Cartoons of the Vietnam Era: A Study of Social Commentary in Films and Television Programs, 1961-1973*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006

## RECENT ARTICLES

- "Slaveholders Who Invested in Territorial Minnesota," *Minnesota History*, Fall 2017
- "Jim Crow in St. Cloud: Restrictive Covenants," *Crossings*, October 2017
- "Franklin and the Early 1970s" in *The Comics of Charles Schulz: The Good Grief of Modern Life*, ed. Jared Gardner and Ian Gordon, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017
- "The Longest Emancipation: A St. Cloud Slave's Four-Year Journey to Freedom," *Crossings*, June-July 2016
- "Brought to Light: The University of Minnesota's Heritage of Slavery," *Hennepin History Museum*, Spring-Summer 2016
- "The Jodon Family & Morrison County's Ties to Slavery," *Morrison County Historical Society*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2016
- "The Slaveholders of Payne-Phalen" *Ramsey County History*, Winter 2016
- "The Slaveholders of Lowry's Addition" *Crossings*, December 2015-January 2016
- "'The Contemplation of Our Righteousness': Vigilante Acts against African Americans in Southwest Minnesota, 1903" *Minnesota History*, Fall 2015
- "African American Representation through the Combination of Live Action and Animation" in *Animating Film Theory*, edited by Karen Beckman of the **University of Pennsylvania**, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014
- Review of book *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, edited by Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Biography*, Spring 2013
- "Cartoons/Animation," *Oxford African American Studies Center*, Editor-in-Chief Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., **Oxford University Press**, May 2012
- Review of book *Hollywood's African American Films* by Ryan Jay Friedman, *Journal of American History*, March 2012

## RECENT MEDIA OUTREACH

- Interview with Kirsti Marohn, "With New Park, St. Cloud Remembers First Slaves—and Those Who Spoke Out," *All Things Considered*, Minnesota Public Radio, 5 May 2017
- Interview with Felicia R. Lee about my book *The Colored Cartoon* in the *New York Times* article "Hey, Hey, Hey! Animated Touchstones," 20 March 2014
- Interview with Mary Beth Marsden about my book *A Critical History of Soul Train on Television* on *Maryland's News Now*, WBAL Radio, 1 February 2012
- Interview with Ambar Espinoza, "St. Cloud Professor Unearths History of Slavery in Minnesota," *All Things Considered*, Minnesota Public Radio, 7 May 2010
- Interview with Taylor Behrendt about the cartoon movie *The Princess and the Frog* on *Good Morning America*, ABC Television Network, 13 December 2009
- Interview with Breeanna Hare about my book *The Colored Cartoon* on CNN.com, 11 December 2009

## RECENT SPEECHES/PANEL DISCUSSIONS

- Speech about the University of Minnesota's Ties to Slavery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 15 February 2017
- Speech about my book *The Colored Cartoon*, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA, 30 August 2016
- Speech about my book *Power, Politics, and the Decline of the Civil Rights Movement*, Black Student Alliance, Normandale Community College, Bloomington, MN, 10 February 2016
- Workshop about my book *Slavery in the Upper Mississippi Valley*, Retired Educators of Minnesota Conference, St. Cloud, MN, September 2015
- Workshop about my book *Power, Politics, and the Decline of the Civil Rights Movement*, Power in Diversity Conference, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN, 31 January 2015
- "The Roots of *The Boondocks*," Jefferson School Heritage Center, Charlottesville, VA, 29 March 2014
- "Animating the 'Help': Labor, Social Place, and the Hollywood Cartoon Mammy," Illustration, Comics, and Animation Conference, **Dartmouth College**, Hanover, NH, 2 March 2014
- "African American Representation through the Combining of Live-Action and Animation," Illustration, Comics, and Animation Conference, **Dartmouth College**, Hanover, NH, 20 April 2013
- Member of a panel discussing Rebecca Skloot's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Common Reading Program, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN, 26 September 2012



The University of Vermont

December 26, 2017

Dear Ms. Dietz,

It is with the greatest pleasure that I write in support of the documentary film project, *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story*, and I am excited and honored to be able to participate in this project as an adviser. The Fleischer brothers were at the forefront of the development of the animation industry in the United States at the start of the twentieth century. Animation has been and continues to be one of the most popular forms of filmmaking, attracting millions of fans from all over the world. Yet in most film histories, the history of animated films tends to be marginalized, and there are few documentaries that explore in detail the development and evolution of this immensely popular cinematic form. Sarah Colt's seminal documentary, *Walt Disney: He Made Believe* (2015), was crucial in revealing the complex and rich history of the animation studios in Hollywood, but her film focused solely on the creation of the Walt Disney Studio. American animation triumphed when many individuals and groups working together and in competition, pushed animation technologically and aesthetically, and developed a unique and distinctive cinematic form. The Fleischer Studios was central to the story of the origins of Hollywood animation and *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story* will greatly enhance the public's understanding and appreciation for the important role animation played in the creation of the Hollywood studio system and its global dominance as an entertainment medium.

The story of the Fleischer brothers is significant in several crucial areas. Firstly, animation is a technologically driven medium whose evolution has always been based on key innovations in the use of sound, depth and movement, and color. The Fleischer brothers' creation of the rotoscope transformed the animation workplace and the images produced by animators. The use of rotoscoping enabled some studios, like the Walt Disney Studio, to move towards greater realism in their images. The Fleischer Studios, however, used the technology to build fantastical, surreal worlds that were immensely popular at the time of their release and are still beloved today. Secondly, the narratives and images created by the Fleischer Studios were *sui generis*. Their cartoons inhabited a modernist space determined by the polyglot urban environment of New York City in the 1920s and 1930s, where racial, ethnic, and sexual attitudes and mores were being challenged and explored. The edgy content of their work pushed animation into an adult market that flourished during this period, as opposed to the childlike content of the Walt Disney Studio. In many ways, the Fleischer Studios' history is a necessary counterweight to the Walt Disney Studio story, which has dominated both academic and popular understandings of the history of animation.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

400 Old Mill, 94 University Place, Burlington, VT 05405-0114

Telephone: (802) 656-3056, Fax: (802) 656-3055

Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer

I strongly encourage the NEH to support this documentary film proposal. Animation continues to be one of America's greatest cultural products, which caters to a massive global audience. *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story*, as the authoritative documentary about the Fleischer Studios, would leave audiences with a richer and more complex understanding of the origins of this major art form while providing them with a greater appreciation for contemporary animation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sarah Nilsen". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Sarah Nilsen, Associate Professor



## SARAH NILSEN

315 Old Mill, University of Vermont, Burlington, VT 05405  
(802) 656-3063, [Sarah.Nilsen@uvm.edu](mailto:Sarah.Nilsen@uvm.edu)

### EDUCATION

- UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: Ph.D., Dec 2000. School of Cinema-Television, Critical Studies *and* M.A., 1995. School of Cinema-Television, Critical Studies.
- AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE: M.F.A., 1992. Screenwriting.
- DARTMOUTH COLLEGE: B.A., 1989. English Literature and Creative Writing.

### PUBLICATIONS

#### Books

- *Projecting America: Film and Cultural Diplomacy at the Brussels World's Fair of 1958* (McFarland & Company, 2011).
- *The Colorblind Screen: Television in Post-Racial America*. eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (New York University Press, 2014).
- *Where Dreams Begin: A Cultural History of the Disney Princesses* (book manuscript, in progress).
- *Colorblind Hollywood: Movies in the Age of Trump*, eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner.

#### Articles/Chapters

- "Some People Just Hide in Plain Sight": Historicizing Racism in *Mad Men*," *The Colorblind Screen: Television in Post-Racial America*. eds. Sarah Nilsen and Sarah Turner (New York University Press, 2014).
- "All-American Girl?: Annette Funicello and Suburban Ethnicity in the Mickey Mouse Club," *Mediated Girlhoods: New Explorations of Girls' Media Culture* ed. Mary Celeste Kearney (Peter Lang, 2011).
- "America's Salesman: Walt Disney's USA in Circarama" *Beyond the Mouse: Disney's Documentaries and Docudramas*, ed. A. Bowdoin Van Riper (McFarland, 2011). Recipient of the PCA/ACA Ray and Pat Browne Award for "Best Edited Collection in Popular and American Culture" for 2011.
- "Be Sure You're Right, Then Go Ahead": The Davy Crockett Gun Craze" *Red Feather: An International Journal of Children's Visual Culture* 1:1 (Spring 2010).
- "White Soul: The 'Magical Negro' in the Films of Stephen King," *The Films of Stephen King: From Carrie to Secret Window*, ed. Tony Magistrale (New York: Palgrave, 2008): 129-140.

### PRESENTATIONS

#### Media Appearances:

- ABC *Behind the Magic: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, national premiere, December 13, 2015, scholar interview.
- PBS *American Experience: Walt Disney*, national premiere September 14-15, 2015, scholar interview.
- Pacifica Radio *Against the Grain* radio show, San Francisco, July 2014, radio interview, "The Colorblind Screen," chosen as one of the "most interesting interviews aired in 2014."

#### Conferences:

- University Film and Video Association, Los Angeles, Summer 2017, scriptwriting presentation, "Shelter."
- Vermont Humanities Council, Ideas on Tap Lecture Series, Winter 2016, "Growing Up Disney: A History of Childhood in the Twentieth Century."
- Popular Culture/American Culture Association, Seattle, Spring 2016, paper presentation, "Animating *Snow White*."
- The World's Fair Since '64, Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Fall 2014, invited workshop and paper presentation, "Put You in the Picture: A History of Films at World's Fairs."

- Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference, Seattle, Spring 2014, paper presentation, "The House of Science: A Kuhnian Revolution at the Century 21 Exposition."
- Illustration, Comics, and Animation Conference, Dartmouth College, Spring 2013, paper presentation, "Animating the Disney Princess."
- American Historical Society Conference, New Orleans, Fall 2012, paper presentation, "*USA in Circarama*: Walt Disney at the Brussels World's Fair of 1958."
- Popular Culture/American Culture Conference, Boston, Spring 2012, paper presentation, "I Don't See Any Difference: Historicizing Racism in *Mad Men*."
- TV in the Academy Conference, University of Vermont, Fall 2011, paper presentation, "The History of Television Studies in the Academy"
- Reimagining Girlhood: Communities, Identities, Self-Portrayals conference, SUNY-Cortland, Fall 2010, paper presentation, "All-American Girl?: Annette Funicello and Suburban Ethnicity."
- Visible Evidence Conference, Concordia University, Montreal, Summer 2005, paper presentation, "Anything Can Happen Day: *The Mickey Mouse Club* Newsreels."
- MIT4: Media in Transition Conference, MIT, Cambridge, Spring 2005, paper presentation, "Everyone Neat and Pretty: Mickey Mouse Mediocrity."
- Film and History Conference, Kansas City, Fall 2002, paper presentation, "'Be sure you're right, then go ahead': Race and the Davy Crockett Television Craze."

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT, English Department, Associate Professor, Fall 2003 to present. Courses Taught: History of Motion Pictures, History of Television, Race and Television, Critical Race Issues in Television, Hip-Hop Culture in Film and Television, Exploitation and Blaxploitation Cinema, Walt Disney and American Culture, Screenwriting

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH, School of Communication, Radio-Television-Film, Assistant Professor, Fall 1999 to Spring 2003.

## HONORS AND AWARDS

University of Vermont:

- Small Grant Research Award, Summer 2017, research at the Walt Disney Archive, CA.
- Small Grant Research Award, Spring 2015, research at The Strong National Museum of Play, Rochester, NY.
- Lattie Coors Research Assistantship Award, Spring 2013, for research on the Disney Princess franchise.
- Faculty Research Support Award, Fall and Spring 2011/12.
- Faculty Development Grant, Fall 2005, research on the plans by the U.S. State Department for the American Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair of 1958.
- Fulbright Scholarship, 1998/9, The Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program, research on American pavilions at Canadian international expositions.
- Vander Putten International Fund, Fall 2002, funding to meet with British media organizations and institutions in order to develop a summer media studies program.

## Professional Activities

- External reviewer for *American Studies*, *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory*, *Societies*
- External reviewer for the following presses: Rowman & Littlefield
- Guest lecturer at Burlington High School
- Special evaluator for Community College of Vermont



Re: "Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story."

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Tom Sito. I am a career cartoon animator in Hollywood that has worked on a number of well known animated classics like *The Little Mermaid* and *The Lion King*. I am also a historian of animation who has authored several books, and I teach at the University of Southern California. I am on the board of governors of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts & Sciences.

I would like to give my endorsement for the proposed project about the Max Fleischer Studio entitled **"Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story."** The story of the Max Fleischer family is a quintessentially American story. Jewish immigrants from Central Europe, settled in the New York City's Lower East Side. They made their fame and fortune in the new technology of cartoon animation, yet their background could not have been more different from their great rival, Walt Disney. While Walt Disney's roots were in the American heartland, the Fleischers were of the shtetl, and the tenements of the Lower East Side. While Walt's oeuvre extolled the virtues of farm life, the Fleischers celebrated urban diversity, the Harlem Renaissance, and Tin Pan Alley.

The Max Fleischer Studio gave Walt Disney his toughest competition, and created a pantheon of characters just as memorable as Mickey and Minnie. Betty Boop, Popeye and Koko the Clown. People still delight to songs like Minnie the Moocher, and Popeye the Sailor Man, and women still refer to a little black mini-dress as a Betty Boop dress. Some called Max The Jewish Walt Disney. Others called Walt the Goy Max Fleischer.

The Fleischer Story involves the glory of American Jazz culture of the mid twentieth century, technological innovation, union brawls and fistfights on Broadway, gangsters, sex, and southern segregation. It is also the story of a family torn apart by ambition and infidelity, where brothers ultimately betrayed one another. It is high time their fascinating story was told.

I worked with many of Max Fleischer's old artists, including my mentor James "Shamus" Culhane, who called Max "The Last Victorian Gentleman." I am pleased Sarah Colt Productions is interested in his story. I participated in their 2014 American Experience documentary on Walt Disney, and I know this one will be equally compelling.

In later years, Dave Fleischer said of his family "If I ever would write my memoirs I would title it There is No Deeper Hatred Than Brotherly Love" It will be fascinating to lay out out for the public for the first time the story behind these famous cartoons. Boop-oop,a-doop!

Sincerely,



Tom Sito  
Professor, The School of Cinematic Arts, USC

Dec. 16, 2017

University of Southern California  
900 W. 34<sup>th</sup> Street, Los Angeles, California 90089 2211 • Tel: 213 821 4396 • Fax: 213 740 5869



## Tom Sito

Tom Sito is an artist, film historian and Professor of Animation at the George Lucas School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California.

A Hollywood animator for 42 years, Tom has worked for Walt Disney, DreamWorks, Hanna & Barbera, Warner Bros, and Fox. His 32 movies include 8 Oscar winners. *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Aladdin* (1992), *The Lion King* (1994), *Osmosis Jones* (2001). TV Shows- *He Man and the Masters of the Universe* (1983), *SheRa Princess of Power* (1995) and the Emmy Award winning *Ziggy's Gift* (1982). He was head of the storyboard departments on Disney's *Pocahontas* (1995), Dreamworks *Shrek* (2001) and Fox's *Garfield* (2004).

Awarded a Cine Golden Eagle (1988), the June Foray Award by ASIFA/Hollywood (2011) for a lifetime of service to the animation community. President of The Animation Guild Local 839 Hollywood (1991-2001). The 2016 winner of the School of Visual Arts award for outstanding Alumni Achievement. Member of the National Cartoonists Society, and the Hyperion Historical Alliance. Vice President of the International Animators Society (ASIFA/Hollywood). In 2017 elected to the Board of Governors of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts & Sciences.

He has lectured around the world on animation and is the author of several books. They include: *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of the Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson* ( Univ Press of Kentucky, Lexington 2006) Recommended by the London Review of Books, the Firestone School of Economics, Princeton University.

*Jews in American Popular Culture*, an anthology edited by Paul Buhle, (Praeger/Greenwood Press, 2006), *Timing for Animation*, Updated Second Edition (Focal Press, London 2009). *Moving Innovation, a History of Computer Animation*. MIT Press (2013), *On Animation: The Director's Perspective*. (Taylor & Francis, 2018).



## BOOK REVIEWS

For *Moving Innovation, A History of Computer Animation*

*"I can't think of a better guide to the vast history of computer animation than Tom Sito. He witnessed much of this story first-hand, then set about researching the rest with clear-eyed interest and unbridled curiosity. He has done a great service for anyone interested in this still-evolving medium—and for posterity. -Leonard Maltin, film historian, author of Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons*

*"Moving Innovation is the most complete, organized, and readable account of the formation of the CG industry I have seen. As an educator, I can easily see this text assigned as required reading for animation and film students. Tom Sito's writing is very conversational and straightforward, and this book will be of great interest to anyone in or studying the field of CG."—Peter Weishar, Dean of Entertainment Arts, Savannah College of Art and Design*

*"Moving Innovation helps us to discover the history of computer animation, from pioneers of experimental animation to inventors, artists, animators, engineers, and technicians who revolutionized the cinema. With his passion, enthusiasm, and encyclopedic knowledge, Tom Sito makes this exciting journey essential to our understanding of this technical and artistic revolution." - Pierre Lambert, historian of animation, University of Paris*

For *Drawing the Line:*

*"Here is a unique perspective on the history of American animation, written by an artist and director who's also played a key role in his industry's labor movement. The stories he tells are alternately heartbreaking and hilarious... Anyone with more than a passing interest in the world of animation should consider this book a must-read." – Leonard Maltin, LeonardMaltin.com*

*"Drawing the Line & contains the best account yet of the 1941 Walt Disney strike, with documentation of the union side." -- London Review of Books*

*"Drawing the Line provides an invaluable point of entry for professional scholars who wish to further investigate the intriguing field of artistic unionism." -- Paul Lawrie, Labour/Le Travail*

*"[Sito's] marvelous book... provides a witty, passionate, radical insider's view of the American film industry that is indispensable reading for anyone interested in the cinema." -- International Socialism*

For *Jews in American Popular Culture:*

*"Jews have had a central impact on many aspects of American popular culture, and this handsome three-volume reference set presents a scholarly, yet accessible, survey of the history of Jewish involvement in pop culture. Editor (Paul) Buhle does an admirable job of grouping the essays by areas of interest. ....Most intriguing are areas of popular culture given little coverage in past publications: fashion, toys, department stores, amusement parks, pornography, the Internet, gangsters, and the Jewish nose....The never before published comic strip by (Harvey) Pekar is a nice bonus. Highly recommended for academic libraries as well as large public libraries." Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter*







Helen Ryan Dobrowski  
Sarah Colt Productions  
[www.sarahcoltproductions.com](http://www.sarahcoltproductions.com)

December 19, 2017

Re: Cartooning America

Dear Helen:

I just wanted you to know, on behalf of Fleischer Studios, how delighted we are that you are making this film to showcase the Fleischer work to a new generation. We are happy to be of help to you in this very worthy endeavor.

All the best,

Mark Fleischer  
President



January 5, 2018

Dear Asaf and Kathryn,

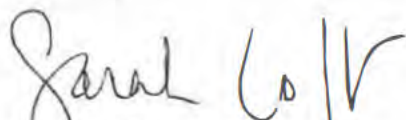
I am delighted to confirm my company's participation in the *Cartooning America* project. The Fleischers' animated characters remain recognizable and beloved, but, unlike Walt Disney, who was their contemporary, their name is mostly forgotten. This project will change that.

My colleague Helen Dobrowski, who is part of the media team and the representative of Sarah Colt Productions, has been my protégé and colleague since 2008. I am excited that the project will benefit from her creativity, storytelling skills, expertise as a producer, and extensive archival research and rights clearances experience.

Many history documentaries rely on new scholarship and a compelling narrative but struggle to access visuals to drive the filmmaking. *Cartooning America*, similar to the series I produced about Walt Disney for PBS, is, by contrast, a cornucopia of riches. The Fleischers and their employees were prolific artists, and the team has, in the last few months, gained unprecedented access to the archival record documenting their lives and their animated shorts, features, artwork, trade advertisements, studio newsletters, and the list goes on.

I am confident that in consultation with the advisory board, the experience and skill of the primary media team, and the support of the National Endowment of the Humanities, the end result will be a compelling and educational documentary film. I am pleased to offer my personal support, and that of my company, to this project!

Sincerely,

  
Sarah Colt

## DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLES

---

### 1. *The Hebrew Superhero*

As a sample of a completed work by the director of *Cartooning America*, we are submitting *The Hebrew Superhero*. In this film, director Asaf Galay traces the little-known history of Israeli comics, from the medium's humble and messy roots to the modern-day characters created by Dudu Geva, Rutu Modan, and Etgar Keret. Often imitating American comics, artists redefined the superhero for Israeli and Jewish contexts. Featuring brilliant uses of animation and interviews with many of these artists, the film is a must for comic book fans and followers of Israeli indie culture.

Please view the work sample here:

(b) (4)

Password: (b) (4)

In this film Mr. Galay worked with his longtime producing colleague, Shaul Betser. The film premiered as the opening film at the Epos Festival in Tel Aviv in 2015. It has also been broadcast on Channel 8 in Israel to critical acclaim, and won the audience award at a comics festival in Israel. It has also been featured at Jewish festivals in Washington, Boston, Miami, and Australia, and in a cartoon festival in France.

### 2. *Walt Disney*

As an additional sample of relevant completed work, we invite you to view clips from the NEH-funded *Walt Disney*. With director and producer Sarah Colt, this four-hour documentary was co-produced by Helen Dobrowski, who will also produce *Cartooning America*. It explores the life of the visionary animator, storyteller, and entrepreneur whose influence on American culture was – and continues to be – more profound than most presidents. *Walt Disney* premiered on PBS in September 2015.

The *Walt Disney* program website, which hosts multi-media features relating to the film, can be viewed here: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/walt-disney/>

Part One, Chapter One of *Walt Disney* can be viewed here: <http://www.pbs.org/video/2365558803/>

**CARTOONING AMERICA: THE FLEISCHER BROTHERS STORY**  
**PRODUCTION BUDGET SUMMARY**  
**NEH GRANT PERIOD START DATE: SEPTEMBER 2018**  
**Sarah Colt Productions & Filmmakers Collaborative**

<b>BUDGET DETAIL</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
CREW	\$13,970
CREW TRAVEL	\$2,500
EQUIPMENT RENTAL	\$8,750
PRODUCTION EXPENSES	\$8,650
FOOD, TRAVEL & SUBSISTENCE	\$26,475
LAB PRODUCTION	\$1,700
EDITING	\$86,420
FINISHING	\$116,400
ARCHIVAL RIGHTS & REPRODUCTIONS	\$122,940
RESEARCH	\$3,700
STAFF	\$216,155
ADMINISTRATION	\$32,840
OTHER	\$8,000
INDIRECT	\$41,500
<b>BUDGET TOTAL</b>	<b>\$690,000</b>

Requested from the NEH:	\$600,000
Cost sharing contributions:	\$90,000

Redacted salary information pursuant to FOIA Exemption (b)(6).

**CARTOONING AMERICA: THE FLEISCHER BROTHERS STORY**

**PRODUCTION BUDGET DETAIL**

**NEH GRANT PERIOD START DATE: SEPTEMBER 2018**

**Sarah Colt Productions & Filmmakers Collaborative 60-minute documentary film**

BUDGET DETAIL					#	unit	#	unit	Rate	TOTAL
CREW										
Camera Person	1	person	7	days						
Sound Person	1	person	7	days						
(Key) Set PA	1	person	7	days						
Overtime (hrs)	2	people	6	hrs						
Subtotal:										13,970
CREW TRAVEL										
Camera Travel Day Rate	1	person	5	days					\$500	2,500
Subtotal:										2,500
EQUIPMENT RENTAL										
Camera Equipment - Interviews	1	rental	7	days					\$400	2,800
Camera Accessories - Interviews	1	allow	7	days					\$200	1,400
Sound Equipment	1	allow	7	days					\$300	2,100
Interview Lighting	1	allow	7	days					\$200	1,400
Additional Equipment	1	allow	7	days					\$150	1,050
Subtotal:										8,750
PRODUCTION EXPENSES										
Location Fees - Interviews	1	fee	3	days					\$1,450	4,350
Gas, Tolls, Parking	1	fee	12	days					\$75	900
Baggage, Porters, Tips	1	allow	4	fees					\$380	1,520
Taxis, Airport Transfer, and Local Transport	1	estimate	10	fees					\$45	450
Van Rental	1	estimate	11	days					\$130	1,430
Subtotal:										8,650



## Redacted salary information pursuant to FOIA Exemption (b)(6).

### FOOD, TRAVEL & SUBSISTENCE

Hotel - Remote Interview Shoot (Crew)	3	people	8	days	\$300	7,200
Airfare - Remote Interview Shoot (Crew)	3	people	2	trips	\$450	2,700
Craft Service - Interviews	1	estimate	7	days	\$130	910
Local Meals	3	people	11	days	\$65	2,145
Interviewee Hotel	16	people	1	nights	\$315	5,040
Interviewee Airfare (var. points of origin)	16	people	1	trip	\$400	6,400
Interviewee Per Diems	16	people	2	days	\$65	2,080

**Subtotal:** 26,475

### LAB PRODUCTION

Drives for HD footage & backups	2	allow	3	drives	\$250	1,500
Camera Cards	1	allow	4	cards	\$50	200

**Subtotal:** 1,700

### EDITING

Offline Editor	1	person	18	weeks	\$[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Finishing Editor	1	person	2	weeks	\$[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Overtime Editing	1	allow	18	hours	\$115	2,070
Transcripts	1	est	34	hours	\$125	4,250
Avid 1 Edit Rm	1	est	22	weeks	\$750	16,500
Edit Share	1	est	24	weeks	\$150	3,600

**Subtotal:** 86,420

### FINISHING

On Line/Conform - includes digitizing time & layback	1	est	20	hours	\$250	5,000
Color Correct	1	est	30	hours	\$350	10,500
Master Stock	1	est	1	tapes	\$300	300
Sound Mix	1	est	30	hours	\$350	10,500
Sound Editing	1	est	2	weeks	\$3,800	7,600
Music Score	1	est	1	fee	\$22,000	22,000
Needledrop Music	4	est	1	fee	\$500	2,000
Record Narration	1	est	6	hours	\$300	1,800
Photo and headline moves	1	est	120	images	\$70	8,400
Animations	8	est	1	fee	\$6,000	48,000
Dubs	1	allow	4	tapes	\$75	300

**Subtotal:** 116,400

Redacted salary information pursuant to FOIA Exemption (b)(6).

#### ARCHIVAL RIGHTS & REPRODUCTIONS

Still Reproductions	1	allow	150	pictures	\$25	3,750
Still Rights	1	allow	55	pictures	\$100	5,500
Still Rights	1	allow	25	pictures	\$250	6,250
Still Rights	1	allow	30	pictures	\$0	-
Headline Rights	1	allow	2	headlines	\$500	1,000
Film Rights - Studios	1	allow	25	minutes	\$2,420	60,500
Film Rights - Commercial	1	allow	7	minutes	\$2,700	18,900
Film Rights - PD	1	allow	3	minutes	\$0	-
Music Rights - MFN (publishing)	1	allow	6	songs	\$1,500	9,000
Music Rights - MFN (master recording)	1	allow	6	songs	\$1,500	9,000
Screening & Research	1	allow	8	fees	\$200	1,600
Masters	1	allow	8	film hours	\$930	7,440

**Subtotal:**

**122,940**

#### RESEARCH

Hotel	1	person	4	days	\$275	1,100
Per Diems	1	est	4	days	\$65	260
Car Rental	1	est	8	allow	\$75	600
Airfare/Train fare	1	est	2	allow	\$450	900
Gas, Tolls, Parking	1	est	6	allow	\$40	240
Articles/Books	1	est	4	allow	\$100	400
Taxis, Porters	1	est	4	allow	\$50	200

**Subtotal:**

**3,700**

#### STAFF

Director	1	person	28	weeks	\$	
Executive Producer/Writer	1	person	10	weeks	\$	
Producer	1	person	22	weeks	\$	
Production Assistant	1	person	16	weeks	\$	
Assistant Editor	1	person	6	weeks	\$	
Rights Supervisor	1	person	1	fee	\$	
Music Supervisor	1	person	1	fee	\$	
Footage & Still Research (remote)	2	person	6	days	\$	
Bookkeeper	1	person	34	wks	\$	
Payroll Service	1	fee	8	mos	\$60	480
Payroll Taxes	1	allow	0.15	on	\$166,500	24,975

**Subtotal:**

**216,155**

**ADMINISTRATION**

Office Rent & Overhead	1	allow	8	mos	\$2,600	20,800
Computers	4	allow	8	mos	\$20	640
IT Support	2	hr	8	mos	\$125	2,000
Software Upgrade & Dropbox	2	fees	8	months	\$40	640
Shipping and Messengers	1	fee	8	mos	\$200	1,600
Telephone	1	allow	8	mos	\$150	1,200
Legal	1	allow	12	hours	\$350	4,200
Supplies	1	allow	8	mos	\$190	1,520
Photocopy & Misc	1	allow	8	mos	\$30	240

**Subtotal:** 32,840

**OTHER**

Adviser Fees - Rough & Fine Cuts	8	people	2	fees	\$500	8,000
----------------------------------	---	--------	---	------	-------	-------

**Subtotal:** 8,000

**INDIRECT**

Insurance	1	est	1	fee	\$7,000	7,000
Worker's Comp	1	allow	1	fee	\$3,000	3,000
Filmmaker's Collab. Admin. Fee	1	allow	5%	fee on	\$600,000	30,000
Filmmaker's Collab. Audit Fee	1	allow	1	fee	\$1,500	1,500

**Subtotal:** 41,500

**BUDGET TOTAL** 690,000

## BUDGET NOTES

---

The production budget assumes a 32-week project, with 6 weeks of pre-production, 4 weeks of production (which includes edit prep), 18 weeks of editing (during which a few final interviews will be filmed), and 4 weeks of post/wrap.

There will be 7 days of interview shooting: 4 on the West Coast, most likely in Los Angeles, and the remaining shoot days on the East Coast, in New York City. To maximize efficiency, we will film multiple interviews per shoot day, which will require some interviewees to travel to our centralized shoot locations. We have included the travel costs for interviewees and limited production/crew members in the budget.

The rights for the Fleischer animations, as outlined in the narrative, are divided between multiple owners (for distribution vs. character rights, for example, as well as music). Therefore, for some titles we will need to pay multiple rights fees. The “Film Rights – Studio” and “Music Rights” budget lines accommodate these cost estimates. The “Film Rights – Commercial” line will cover the cost of clearing rights from commercial houses for other archival footage, or clips from entities such as the Walt Disney Company.

We show a staggered schedule of staff times in the budget; we will be more fully-staffed during production and post, while during the edit phase we will pare down to essential staff, allowing us to maximize the use of our funds.