



Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant-Garde

By Esther Leslie

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With ruminations on drawing, colour and caricature, on the political meaning of fairy-tales, talking animals and human beings as machines, *Hollywood Flatlands* brings to light the links between animation, avant-garde art and modernist criticism.

Focusing on the work of aesthetic and political revolutionaries of the inter-war period, Esther Leslie reveals how the animation of commodities can be studied as a journey into modernity in cinema. She looks afresh at the links between the Soviet Constructivists and the Bauhaus, for instance, and those between Walter Benjamin and cinematic abstraction. She also provides new interpretations of the writings of Siegfried Kracauer on animation, shows how Theodor Adorno's and Max Horkheimer's film viewing affected their intellectual development, and reconsiders Sergei Eisenstein's famous handshake with Mickey Mouse at Disney's Hyperion Studios in 1930.

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Hollywood Flatlands: Animation, Critical Theory and the Avant-Garde By Esther Leslie Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1330772 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Verso
- Published on: 2004-04
- Released on: 2004-06-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .70" w x 5.45" l, 1.02 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 344 pages

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“This is about much more than the House of Mouse, tracing with a deft hand the aesthetic precursors of film animation in the work of Hans Richter, Walter Ruttmann and Dziga Vertov.”—*Radical Philosophy*

“In this incisive and profound study, you find such classic subjects as Adolph Hitler, Charlie Chaplin, Leon Trotsky, Mickey Mouse, Nazism, Leni Riefenstahl, Theodor W. Adorno, Sergei M. Eisenstein, Dumbo, Betty Boop, the Class Struggle, Piet Mondrian, Walter Benjamin and Walt Disney (along with much, much more).”—Giannalberto Bendazzi

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“Perceptive and elegant.”—*Times Literary Supplement*

“Once in a long while, a book appears that meets all the high standards of scholarship. In the field of animation, Leslie’s *Hollywood Flatlands* is that work ... groundbreaking.”—*Choice, A Choice Outstanding Academic Title of 2003*

About the Author

Esther Leslie is a lecturer in English and Humanities at Birkbeck College, London. She is the author of *Walter Benjamin: Overpowering Conformism* and sits on the editorial boards of *Historical Materialism*, *Radical Philosophy* and *Revolutionary History*.

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