

Caroline Leaf (compiled by Donald McWilliams)

In the spirit of Norman McLaren, Caroline Leaf has created new techniques and used them to express the metamorphic imagery that is her gift to animation. To quote George Griffin:

"It is as if she took McLaren literally, letting us experience those moments between frames, when minute shifts and strokes coax inert masses into their next inexorable position. Getting from A to B, simple as that. But only a Leaf can show us how beautiful, astonishing, awkward this choreography can be: a pooped owl caught up in a migratory charade, a beetle creeping/peering out from under a bed, a Street scene depicted as a young boy's subjective blurred stream of images." New York, 1991

Norman met Caroline in 1969 at Harvard and this meeting is described by Derek Lamb as follows:

"Do you remember the day when Norman McLaren came and visited the class and saw your light box? He figuratively jumped clean out of his socks. His delight was extreme, in the way only McLaren could express delight in discovery. He stood there for the longest time, letting the sand run between his fingers, shaping forms with it and saying over and over, 'Oh Caroline, this is wonderful! In all my years in animation I've never thought of this!' He was like a kid in a sand box."

ASIFA-Canada devoted the January 1992 (Vol 19. No. 2) bulletin to Caroline Leaf and it is from this issue that we reprint the following abstracts:

"Animation seemed to come so naturally to her. Her remarkable talent is clearly visible, even in her earliest animation films, which used sand as the principle medium and launched her career as a successful filmmaker. I remember seeing a dazzling, animated interpretation of Peter and The Wolf. Perhaps it's the apparent simplicity of her work that has allowed her to evolve as an artist and capture our collective attention. In fact, I believe The Street is a breakthrough in contemporary animation films, not only for its quality cinematography but because it introduces a new style or approach: that which animates and transforms space. This is obvious in the films that have followed her production. However, what are considered stylistic touches in other films are seen as a fundamental and highly personal characteristic of Caroline Leaf's work. Entre Deux Soeurs, one of her most recent works, proves this beyond a shadow of a doubt." -Pierre Hébert

To Caroline Leaf, ^[1]_[SEP]Not only has Caroline Leaf given us Le Mariage du Hibou, she has also provided us with a seemingly inexhaustible collection of stunning visual marriages. All three are rendered in a stripped down manner that constantly redefines the notions of fusion and transformation. In short, how can we keep from being overwhelmed by the images created by this remarkable talent? Like many other people, I am indebted to Caroline Leaf. She is an inspiration and her determination is an example to all of us. I am thankful for the opportunity to participate in such a heartfelt tribute to one who has, through her immense talent, given us so much. I hope that she will continue to inspire us, widen our horizons, bring film animation to new levels and enchant people the world over. -Frédéric Back

"Je me souviens d'un jour d'été très chaud où Loon s'exerçait à son art avec une ardeur, une détermination, une discipline qu'elle seule semble être capable de maintenir. "Loon"je lui dis:

"Viens jardiner!" Elle me répondit en souriant, les yeux pétillants: "I'm scratching on Norman McLaren's moviola, what more do I want.?" -Caroline Leaf

(taken from the 1994 Ottawa International Animation Festival Catalogue)