

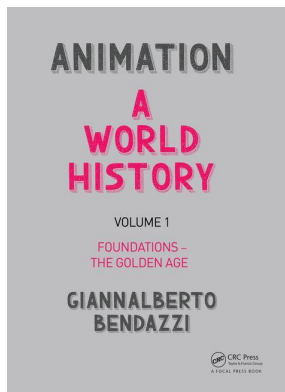
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 26 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *CRC Press*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



Animation: A World History Volume I: Foundations—The Golden Age

Giannalberto Bendazzi

Silent Oceania

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.1201/9781315721057-10>

Giannalberto Bendazzi

Published online on: 17 Nov 2015

How to cite :- Giannalberto Bendazzi. 17 Nov 2015, *Silent Oceania from: Animation: A World History, Volume I: Foundations—The Golden Age* CRC Press

Accessed on: 26 Mar 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.1201/9781315721057-10>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

10

SILENT OCEANIA

Australia

Australian cinema dates back to 1896 with the production of documentaries. The very first feature film in living memory is Charles Tait's *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906). That florid age ended with the arrival of the sound track, and except for one or two unusual films, the Australian filmmaking industry did not regain prominence until the 1970s and 1980s when government agencies offered opportunities to talented actors and directors.

During World War I, Harry Julius animated political vignettes with cut-outs for the newsreel the *Australian Gazette*. These one- or two-minute films exhibited better-than-average drawing and technique and, presumably, Julius incorporated such skills into the lightning sketches he created for his later films. Other animators worked during the 1920s and 1930s, leaving no record except for some advertising spots and a few vignettes on daily events, such as cricket matches.

More About It

This is the appreciation Pierre Jouvanceau gives in his *The Silhouette Film* (Le Mani, Genoa, 2004, pp. 150–153):

Exhausted by his journey, Prince Achmed walks along the water's edge under the great palms which encircle a lake. We feel the calm of the place. There is a flapping of wings and three magnificent birds land on the bank. Achmed hides in the foliage. The winged silhouettes strip off their bird costumes, revealing lithe, young, female bodies. The tallest of them, and the most beautiful, is Peri Banu, Queen [of the country]. Thinking they are alone, the naked girls step into the water, watched by a Prince already madly in love. Is the following scene shown through the eyes of Achmed, in a 'point-of-view' shot? The framing closes in, the set fades and the image shows the condensing that is characteristic of telephoto lenses, those

instruments so loved by voyeurs. While the set had been complex a moment before, imitating the natural beauty of the environment in which the protagonists found themselves, suddenly there is no longer any background. There is no separation of water and sky and everything seems to have dissolved into pure light. Nothing is left of the luxuriant foliage except a few leaves in the foreground – the ones that are supposedly hiding Achmed. It is as if the scene were concentrated on the bewitching nudity of the bathers. Nothing matters any more except the spectacle of the naked bodies. Even the water, in which they are partly immersed, is invisible. A surprising image, all bathed in light, for a scene which is supposed to be happening at night. Some other shots in *Prince Achmed*, a feature whose sets are among the most complex in the history of silhouette cinema, are similarly stripped of detail. But none demonstrates as forcefully as this one the potential of a temporary rejection of décor. Peri Banu bathing in 'non-water': this is the dissolution of all representation, the reduction of the film's world to a few indications, the subjugation of the set to the animated silhouettes. It is also the suggestive power – here at its strongest – of the light, the great return of the silhouettes to bathe in the purifying power of immaculate white. It is no mere chance that this scene coincides with a pause in the unbridled rhythm of the events that are pushing Achmed towards an ever-receding goal. This special moment when the hero's heart opens up to love is also, quite naturally, complemented by a visual halt. Forgotten is the luxuriance of the extraordinary landscapes where black magic is constantly brewing, forgotten the extreme rapidity of the action. The set has disintegrated, the rhythm has slowed, all peripheral vision – which could have distracted attention from the bathers who are so bewitching Achmed – is eliminated. Thanks to this focusing on the void, the Prince's dazzlement has also become palpable to the viewer. Apart from the physical details of the scene, this pause is reminiscent of the sexual act (of the phallogentric variety). Moreover, does not Achmed, having hidden Peri Banu's feathered finery and thus prevented her from escaping, indulge in something that looks like a kidnapping? The erotic charge generated by the scene is undeniable, and it features several of the genre's

conventions. There is the bathing, which justifies the state of undress – and thus dispels its morally obnoxious aspect – and at the same time legitimises the insistent framing on the naked bodies; the carefree behaviour of the girls, who do not know they are being spied on; the voyeurism of the hero, which doubles of course for the viewer's; and the theft of the clothes which signifies, for the girls, both the sudden awareness of a hitherto unsuspected presence and also the impossibility of recovering their previous state, their lost innocence. The eroticisation of the bodies, in this precise scene, happens via a mutilation of the silhouettes. It is a mutilation in the literal sense, an amputation done with scissors to the cardboard figures. The water, the element of décor whose representation is, paradoxically, refused us in the very shot where it becomes narratively

indispensable, is actually suggested in a manner which seems very strange – but is in fact the only one possible. We must remember that because of the back-lighting and the effect of translucency no silhouette element can be masked by a décor element that is lighter in tone than itself. This is why, as they wade deeper into the invisible waves, the feet, then the legs of the naiads are cut off at the supposed point of their contact with the water, and little moving pieces of black card, suggesting the reflection of the body, complete the illusion. This progressive amputation continues until the wading comes to a stop, indicating the presumed depth of the lake. Even if invisible in form, the lake is there. The silhouettes alone, though at the cost of their physical integrity, have rendered it perceptible. The pure light has transmuted into water.



THE THIRD PERIOD

The Third Period includes the years when Walt Disney dominated the industry and the development of film animation as a primary form of entertainment, acclaimed by critics and beloved by audiences throughout the world. An appropriate denomination of this period is 'The Golden Age (1928–1951)'.

