

HALAS & BATCHELOR CARTOON FILMS DONATED TO BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE

*“extraordinary archive of work that defines some
of the greatest achievement in British animation”*

Paul Wells, Reference Guide to British and Irish Film Directors



Napoleon in *Animal Farm* (1954)

The BFI National Archive is delighted to announce the acquisition of the Halas & Batchelor collection, including over 2,800 cans produced during almost 50 years by this pioneering British company, famed for internationally renowned classics such as ***Animal Farm***, ***The Owl and the Pussycat*** in 3D and ***Tales of Hoffnung***.

The Halas & Batchelor Cartoon Company was founded in 1940 by husband and wife team, John Halas and Joy Batchelor. The company archive including film prints, stills, scripts, papers, and thousands of original cells has been donated to the BFI National Archive in its entirety by their daughter Vivien Halas, who retains commercial rights.

The Halas & Batchelor story reveals a uniquely prolific contribution to animation in Britain. They were once dubbed the “king and queen of British animation.” They hold an unequalled position as a British counterpart to Disney. They transformed the animation business by working with an extraordinary range of talented individuals: artists, writers, performers and designers including Saul Bass, Alberto Cavalcanti, Gerard Hoffnung, Alexander Mackendrick, Henry Moore, Sir Michael Redgrave, Ronald Searle and Peter Sellers. The company’s work on international artists and unusual subject matter (from Moholy-Nagy, Leonardo Da Vinci or Kraftwerk’s **Autobahn**) was boldly innovative and like all their work was always crafted with a delicious and gentle wit.

Halas & Batchelor produced theatrical shorts, wartime information, commercials and industrial training films, alongside children’s films and series, histories of music, cinema and art, and avant garde projects. Theirs is a profoundly rich and enduring legacy which continues to inspire generations of animators in Britain and around the world. John Halas’ influence on animation was truly global as he was one of the founders of ASIFA (Association Internationale du Film d’Animation / International Animated Film Association).

Amanda Nevill, BFI Director said, “This is the largest ever single donation of British animation and represents an extraordinarily rich gift to the national collection. We are very grateful to Vivien Halas for entrusting us with the care of this of astonishing group of films and related items. We look forward to working on ensuring these films and artefacts are enjoyed by the widest possible group of people in years to come. This is a collection which demands to be seen and we have the curatorial skills and resources to present it in new and exciting ways, whether online as an educational resource, in our expanding chain of BFI mediatheques, on DVD or in cinemas.”

Vivien Halas said, “A portrait bust of my father has been in the board room of the BFI for many years and the BFI National Archive has already preserved most of Halas & Batchelor’s early war films in the COI collection. So it seems very apt that this great institution should become a permanent home for the fruits of my parents’ labours. I gave up my career as a graphic designer in Paris to care for the collection after my father’s death in 1995 but now need the security of a large organisation who can offer the specialist knowledge to preserve the materials for future generations and to make them accessible”

Nick Park, Aardman Animation said, “Halas and Batchelor are a great leading light and mainstay in British animation. I have very fond memories of the animated educational films from school and of

course, H&B made one of the first British animated feature films. They have always been part of my life, John Halas was the judge on the first animation competition I ever entered – I didn't win, but admired him and looked up to him as a great figure in British animation”.

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About the BFI

The BFI is the nation's cultural organisation for film, keeping the breadth of voices in moving image culture alive and known. Through its venues, festivals, film releases and online, the BFI inspires people to understand and enjoy film culture, ensuring that everyone in the UK can see the broadest range and choice of films, otherwise not provided by commercial cinema. The BFI reaches an audience of over 7.5 million in the UK every year.

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