

# Talbot Rice exhibition Hand Made Cinema featuring Norman McLaren



Norman McLaren draws directly onto 35mm film. (c) 1949  
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The University of Edinburgh's Talbot Rice Gallery is to show Hand-made Cinema, an exhibition celebrating the pioneering work of Scottish artist Norman McLaren (1914 – 1987). Part of the McLaren 2014 programme, Hand-made Cinema celebrates the fluid – almost alchemical – creative processes of this experimental filmmaker and musician, screening examples of his films alongside the physical materials that made them possible.

Norman McLaren engaged with the underlying materials of filmmaking – painting directly on to film and film soundtracks, scratching into celluloid, developing electronic musical compositions from black and white cards and making bespoke equipment. Drawing upon his own technical notes and artist statements throughout, Hand-made Cinema at Talbot Rice Gallery focuses on McLaren's abstract works, where his revolutionary techniques were liberated from narrative or figuration, resulting in some of the most innovative works of the last century.

Alongside a selection of his finished films, the exhibition includes McLaren's dope sheets – the sketches used by animators to plan their work – and other idiosyncratic drawings and bespoke equipment used to work out new ideas. Coupled with his notes and personal letters he wrote to his parents about his work in different countries, Hand-made

Cinema creates a picture of an extraordinary artist and innovator who demonstrated the enduring possibilities of analogue film.

Films featured in the exhibition include *Begone Dull Care* (1949), made with inks applied to a frameless film-strip and synchronised with Oscar Peterson's jazz soundtrack. The film has a distinctive fluidity, representative of the way McLaren would, "always leave as much room as possible for improvisation during the movie-making process". With *Mosaic* (1965) McLaren worked out an analogue technique to create a mathematically precise abstract film, rivalling the early computer animation of the same period; electronic music made by engraving in to the soundtrack accompanies the stark abstract patterns. Then *Synchromy* (1971), arguably the culmination of McLaren's experiments, employs a unique system of animated sound. The revolutionary soundtrack, constructed frame by frame by photographing black and white cards, was coloured and transferred to the visual area of the film to make abstract moving images in which you literally see the sound.

'This exhibition represents the biggest examination of McLaren's practice during the McLaren 2014 celebrations. We are delighted that McLaren's unique artistic achievements have been curated and presented at the Talbot Rice Gallery during his centenary year.' Iain Gardner, McLaren 2014 Artistic Director.

Hand-made Cinema is part of the McLaren 2014 programme and is realised with support of the National Film Board of Canada and the University of Stirling.

### **Hand-made Cinema**

The work of Norman McLaren

31 May – 5 July 2014

Exhibition Open | Tues – Fri 10am–5pm, Sat 12–5pm | Admission

Free