

Jacqueline Goss Artist Statement

I make movies and web-based works that explore how political, cultural, and scientific systems change the ways we think about ourselves. Older works include “The 100th Undone” and “There There Square” –short videos about the Human Genome Project and North American geographical mapmaking, respectively. My most recent videos are “How To Fix The World” --a look at Soviet-sponsored literacy programs in 1930’s Central Asia and “Stranger Comes To Town” –an animated documentary about the identity-tracking of immigrants and travelers coming into the United States. My current project “Hart’s Location” will be the final work of this trilogy about communities of people that are changed and defined by evolving social systems.

My favorite stories are about people who set out to objectively measure, describe or map some part of the world. Inevitably human nature and the natural color and noise of the world complicate that objective task. What happens instead is always far more interesting. How are these acts processed and manifested in the thoughts, utterings, and gestures of the people they affect? Does the Genome Project change the way one thinks about the consequences of human fallibility? Does the process of mapping a nation lead to its inhabitants’ internalization of surveillance systems? What does a 1930’s Muslim student’s ability to solve a syllogism say about learning to live under Soviet Socialism? How does the lending of one’s body to a physical identification process change how one sees oneself? These are the questions at the heart of my most recent videos. I work with the assertion that illuminating obscured histories and texts, and illustrating their connections to each other, can lead to a more complex and pleasurable reading of our own lives.

My recent projects have taken the form of 2D digital animations working within the indeterminate genre of the “animated documentary.” I use animation, not to create fantastic worlds or data-based illustrations, but to craft subjective responses to what people actually do, write, and say.

Arguably, animated documentaries have been around since the beginning of cinema, still, few works fall within this genre. In my categorization, they include Winsor MacKay’s 1918 film “Sinking of the Lusitania,” sections of Chris Marker’s films, Bob Sabiston’s “Roadhead,” Marjut Rimmenen’s “Some Protection,” Blanca Aguerre’s “Our Story,” the work of the Southern Ladies Animation Group, and the on-line ruminations of YH Chang. Increasingly filmmakers have been exploring this genre and I find this to be a good context for thinking about the things I make.

The unsettled territory of the animated documentary – where historical document meets the unabashedly subjective eye --appeals to me. Here I work to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between image and text on the common ground of abstraction, and the powerful ability of sound to give animation qualities of physical embodiment and purpose. Although animation is sometimes read as simplistic or reductive (perhaps because of associations with media for children), I find that animated works are usually *more challenging* to read than live-action cinema because of their abstract nature. I embrace this apparent contradiction and want to make more use of it in my work. For instance, using animation let’s me challenge stereotypes

head-on, to repurpose their simplistic outlines by combining disparate faces and voices, or by reducing a stereotype visually to the point of absurdity.

Producing an animation is time-consuming and involves hours of repetitive labor in one sitting. It often feels much more like a craft than an art practice, and I find myself meditating on that distinction and how it affects my projects. This is work that I enjoy. Making a mouth move in sync with an audio interview gives me time to really hear subtle cadences and changes in a voice and more fully understand what that person was thinking and feeling during an interview.

Increasingly, I am interested in combining animation with photographic and live-action images, to explore the use of rotoscoping, and to poke at the places where one can't easily define an image as photographic or drawn (many Google Earth images are like this for me). In this regard I find new media theorist Lev Manovich's reconceptualization of live-action filmmaking as a subset of animation very useful. While live-action images make their way into my projects, I still define them as animations.

My videos and web-based projects have shown in festivals, museums, and galleries including the New York Film Festival, Eyebeam Atelier, Rotterdam International Film Festival, London Film Festival, the Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival, the Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston), Pacific Film Archive, Walker Center for the Arts, and on Cabinet magazine's "immaterial" website. My videos have been broadcast on Free Speech TV and the IFC channel and are distributed by Video Data Bank in Chicago.

I've received support from the Alpert Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and Tribeca Film Institute, Berliner Künstlerprogramm (DAAD), Creative Capital, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, Jerome Foundation, and residencies from Banff Centre for the Arts, Eyebeam Atelier, and the Macdowell Colony. I began making films and videos as a student at Brown University during the late '80s. I currently teach in the Film and Electronic Arts Department at Bard College in Annandale, New York.