

Wed 20 Nov 2024

barbican

Animation at War

27 Feb – 25 Sep 2025

Barbican Cinema presents **Animation at War**, a new year long series which explores how filmmakers use animation to capture the chaos, complexity and human cost of war.

- ***In This Corner of the World* + Introduction from Michael Leader + Jake Cunningham** – Thu 27 Feb 2025
- ***When the Wind Blows* + ScreenTalk** – Wed 28 May 2025
- ***Unicorn Wars* + ScreenTalk** – Thu 25 May 2025



In This Corner of the World, Japan 2016, Dir Sunao Katabuchi

Spanning decades and featuring rare films from around the world, **Animation at War** takes a thoughtful gaze at works that use animation to circumvent our defences and confront us with the psychological horrors of combat, the looming threat of nuclear destruction and the tragedy of life lived in the shadow of war. Through expressive and allegorical storytelling, animation serves as a powerful medium for examining the human experience in times of conflict, giving voice to stories that live-action films often struggle to convey.

The series opens on Thu 27 Feb 25 with **Sunao Katabuchi's** coming-of-age drama ***In This Corner of the World*** (Japan 2016) and an introduction to the film. This tells the story of Suzu, a young Japanese woman struggling to live a normal life in the final days of the

Second World War, as her aspirations of becoming an artist are curtailed by household duties, marriage, and the reality of the shadow of war.

The film has an attention to detail both in its dramatization of the daily struggles during wartime, and in its recreation of the architecture of Hiroshima City and its surrounding landscape - textures made all the more bitterly tragic by the events of 1945. Upon its release in 2017, it was embraced by both critics and the public alike and won the Japan Academy Film Prize for Animation of the Year.

Animation at War continues in May - with the haunting British film ***When the Wind Blows*** (UK 1986) – and ScreenTalk – that dramatizes the worst fears of the Cold War era’s nuclear anxiety, as told through the misfortunes of an ill-prepared elderly English couple.

Director **Jimmy T Murakami**’s 1986 adaptation of **Raymond Briggs**’ harrowing graphic novel stands as a (sometimes overlooked) classic of British animation, bringing to life Briggs’ empathetic portrayal of the innocence and ignorance of everyday folk in the face of the sabre-rattling of the powers that-be and the devastation of nuclear war.

Captured in a hybrid style that spans hand-drawn illustration, newsreel footage, grotesque satirical cartoons, and tangible stop-motion settings, *When the Wind Blows* was a pointed broadside aimed squarely at the superpowers behind the Cold War. Even when viewed today, its gut-wrenching emotional power is undiminished.

The series closes in September with ***Unicorn Wars*** (Spain 2022) and ScreenTalk, in **Alberto Vazquez**’s heady and provocative Spanish language animation, teddy bears are put against unicorns in this ultra-violent, stylised mash-up of *Bambi* and *Apocalypse Now*, using animation to upset expectations as humour gives way to horror.

Teddy Bears and Unicorns are locked in an ancestral war, and a new generation of cuddly recruits have been trained, doped up and sent to the slaughter. As their tour of duty through the Magic Forest turns towards psychological horror, Vazquez uses his candy-coloured premise to explore themes of religious zealotry, the tortured legacies of military fascism, and the depths of the soul.

Series Curator **Michael Leader** and Barbican Producer **Jonathan Gleneadie** said: *“With our new Animation strand we hope to continue to highlight incredible animated features and shorts from around the world, with a focus on war and conflict. The series will use the creative capabilities of the artform to explore the subject in ways that live-action films cannot, using the medium to side-step our defences and bring us closer to the psychological and physical horrors of conflict through the thoughtful gaze of these amazing animators.”*

LISTINGS:

***In This Corner of the World* + introduction by Michael Leader and Jake Cunningham, creators of the animation-focused podcast series Ghibliothèque**

Japan 2016, Dir Sunao Katabuchi, 129min

Thu 27 Feb 2025, 6.10pm

Cinema 3

Katabuchi had to turn to crowd-funding to finance this adaptation of **Fumiyo Kōno**’s manga series. On release, it was embraced by the Japanese public and the critical establishment alike. In 2017, it won the Japan Academy Film Prize for Animation of the Year (beating the wildly popular blockbuster ***Your Name***) and was later singled out by the Hiroshima for Global Peace campaign, which commended the film for “[*reminding*] us of how invaluable our mundane

everyday life is, how cruel the war can be which robs us of it unreasonably, and how precious peace is.”

When The Wind Blows + ScreenTalk

UK 1986 dir Jimmy T. Murakami, 94min

Wed 28 May 2025, 6.20pm

Cinema 3

Briggs based the protagonists, Jim (**John Mills**) and Hilda (**Peggy Ashcroft**) Bloggs, on his own parents: a generation who implicitly trust their higher-ups and put their faith in public information pamphlets and films, such as the controversial and widely-lampooned Protect and Survive campaign. Both the film and book explore how a Blitz spirit doesn't count for much against megaton-sized bombs and deadly radiation.

When the Wind Blows was the second Briggs adaptation by the production company TVC and then-new public service broadcaster Channel 4. But unlike their first collaboration – the beloved festive favourite **The Snowman** – **When the Wind Blows** was a pointed broadside aimed squarely at the superpowers behind the Cold War. Yet, even when viewed today, its gut-wrenching emotional power is undiminished.

Unicorn Wars + ScreenTalk

Spain 2022, Dir Alberto Vázquez, 92min

Thu 25 Sep 2025, 6.20pm

Cinema 3

Teddy Bears and Unicorns are locked in an ancestral war, and a new generation of cuddly recruits have been trained up, doped up and sent to the slaughter. As their tour of duty through the Magic Forest turns towards psychological horror, **Vazquez** uses his candy-coloured premise to explore themes of religious zealotry, the tortured legacies of military fascism, and the depths of the soul.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

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Standard ticket price: £13/ Members: £10.40/ Concessions: £11

Under 18s: £6, Young Barbican: £5

Barbican press room

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communications team's contact details are listed on our website at www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room

About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), and a London base of the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other associates and partners including the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [the BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Britten Sinfonia](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), [Darbar Festival](#), [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [Drum Works](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), [Serious](#), and [Trafalgar Entertainment](#).

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About Barbican Cinema

We connect audiences with a curated programme of international cinema; from celebrated filmmakers to ground-breaking and under-heard voices from past and present.

Our programmes are presented in Cinemas 1 in the main centre and Cinemas 2&3 on Beech Street. Our programme ranges from thematic seasons that respond to today's world, to new releases, ScreenTalks, cross-artform collaborations, family events, access screenings and event cinema that presents the performing arts on screen.

We showcase the work of emerging filmmakers, as well as less familiar work of exceptional filmmakers from the UK and around the world.

We champion the work of Barbican Young Programmers and give stage to emerging musicians in our ongoing film & live music series which includes our flagship collaboration with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

As part of a cross-arts centre, our cinemas are a cultural space for people to share the viewing experience. We strive to be inclusive in everything we do; providing platforms for the widest possible range of filmmakers and ensuring we are an open, welcoming and accessible venue for all our audiences.

