“Connecting the Dots: Fischinger to McLaren to Levin”
Presented by David Mesplé at the 27th International Conference of the Society for Animation Studies: Beyond the Frame

ABSTRACT: In "Connecting the Dots: Fischinger to McLaren to Levin," my intention will be to draw a timeline from the early experiments of Oskar Fischinger through the pioneering work of Norman McLaren to the culminating digital expression of real-time interactive sound and vision performances of contemporary artist Golan Levin (born 1972). These three artists found ways to take new technologies, with their inherent limitations, and find ways to elicit visual and auditory effects that these technologies were not originally designed to produce. Within their vigorous adaptations and technological innovations, each created advancements that distinguished their work while informing the work of other artists. It could be argued that there is an evolution in the art they produced concurrent with the evolution of the technologies at their dispossals, but, more importantly, the innovations they pioneered drove that evolution. Most surprising are the visual and auditory similarities in the work of these three experimental animators, spanning technologies that moved from analog to digital processes, but never left out the input of the human hand. In this essay, I attempt to find parallels in the technological, philosophical, and theoretical approaches taken by 3 different artists from different times, Oskar Fischinger (1900-1967), Norman McLaren (1914- 1987), and Golan Levin (1972-present). While Fischinger and Levin did not live contemporaneously, there are similarities in all three’s processes, philosophies and art.