

Prometheus' Garden

A Film by Bruce Bickford

“Wildly imaginative and morbidly funny.”

-San Francisco Chronicle

“Surreal, absurd, and metaphorical.”

-Animation Magazine

“Psychedelic metamorphosis.”

-Animation World Journal

Running time: 28 minutes

Year completed: 1988

Release date: March 2008

Genre: Animation

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Select Screenings:

- Anney Festival of Animated Film
- Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography
- Ottawa International Animation Festival
- Animac International Animation Festival, Lleida, Spain
- Animadrid International Film Festival, Madrid, Spain
- Plastic Paper Film Festival, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
- Carolina Film and Video Festival
- Eastman House

Overview: Best known for his collaborations with rock iconoclast Frank Zappa in the 1970s (*Dub Room Special*, *Baby Snakes*, *The Amazing Mr. Bickford*), underground animator Bruce Bickford has influenced generations of artists with his startlingly original vision.

Prometheus' Garden (28 minutes, 1988) is the only completed film over which Bickford maintained complete creative control. Except for a handful of select screenings, the film has resided in the basement of the reclusive Bickford for two decades. The *Prometheus' Garden* DVD is available to the public (at www.microcnema.com) for the first time since its completion twenty years ago. The DVD features a commentary track by Bickford, an alternate score by Laird Dixon, and the half hour documentary featurette, *Luck of a Foghorn*, directed by Brett Ingram.

Synopsis: Inspired by the Greek myth of Prometheus, a Titan who created the first mortals from clay and stole fire from the gods, *Prometheus' Garden* immerses viewers in a cinematic universe unlike any other. The dark and magical images of this haunting film unfold in a dreamlike stream of consciousness revealing an unlikely cast of clay characters engaged in a violent struggle for survival. Enchanted forests, animated torture chambers, hamburgers that morph into mythical monsters, and epic battles between giants, fairies, and anachronistic historical figures populate just a small corner of Bickford's animated universe.

Like all Bickford films, *Prometheus' Garden* defies description and simply must be experienced. In *Clay Animation*, film scholar Michael Frierson writes: “Bickford offers us a visionary landscape, a hallucinogenic retreat into magical settings where figure and ground may transform into the other at any moment, enchanted settings in which modern technocrats are easy villains and nature is under siege.”

Bickford is an underground artist who has mystified animation critics and inspired generations of animators, while somehow eluding fame. He has been described as the world's only “outsider artist” working in the medium of animation. He has been recognized as a “genius” by Frank Zappa and countless other iconoclasts. Under employment by Frank Zappa, Bickford relinquished creative control of his work (which was edited and scored by Zappa). Consequently, *Prometheus' Garden* is Bickford's most comprehensive and least compromised vision.

About the Filmmaker, Bruce Bickford (Director):

Bruce Bickford was born in Seattle in 1947. Inspired by Willis O'Brien's animation in *King Kong* and the work of Ray Harryhausen, Bickford began animating in the mid-1960s. After a tour of duty in Vietnam as a U.S. Marine, he sought work as an animator in California where he met rock musician Frank Zappa. After a six-year collaboration with Zappa in the 1970s, Bickford returned to Seattle where he has lived since. Following the completion of *Prometheus' Garden* in 1988, Bickford has created several hours of clay and line animation, none of which has been edited. In 2004, Bickford appeared in the award-winning documentary feature, *Monster Road* (directed by Brett Ingram), about his life and work.