

JAN SVANKMAJER Bio:

One of the great Czech filmmakers, Jan Svankmajer was born in 1934 in Prague where he still lives. He trained at the Institute of Applied Arts from 1950 to 1954 and then at the Prague Academy of Performing Arts (Department of Puppetry). He soon became involved in the Theatre of Masks and the famous Black Theatre, before entering the Laterna Magika Puppet Theatre where he first encountered film. In 1970 he met his wife, the surrealist painter Eva Svankmajerova, and the late Vratislav Effenberger, the leading theoretician of the Czech Surrealist Group, which Svankmajer joined and of which he still remains a member.

Svankmajer made his first film in 1964 and for over thirty years has made some of the most memorable and unique animated films ever made, gaining a reputation as one of the world's foremost animators, and influencing filmmakers from Tim Burton to The Brothers Quay. His brilliant use of claymation reached its apotheosis with the stunning 1982 film *Dimensions of Dialogue*. In 1987 Svankmajer completed his first feature film, *Alice*, a characteristically witty and subversive adaptation of Alice in Wonderland, and with the ensuing feature films *Faust*, *Conspirators of Pleasure* and *Little Otik* in 2000 Svankmajer has moved further away from his roots in animation towards live-action filmmaking, though his vision remains as strikingly surreal and uncannily inventive as ever.

He has also exhibited his drawings, collages and 'tactile sculptures', many of which were produced in the mid-1970s, when he was temporarily banned from film-making by the Czech authorities. His films are shown in major museums worldwide, including this year at the 54th Biennale of Venice.