



October 7, 2008, Convo Hour  
Collins Center

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## **“Woody Abstracted: Film Experiments in the Cartoons of Shamus Culhane, 1943-46”**

In his landmark autobiography, animator Shamus Culhane describes the mid-1940s as a period of artistic awakening for him, when he engaged with the works of such film theorists as Eisenstein and Pudovkin, among others. Working at that point as a director at the Walter Lantz studio, he resolved to put theory to practice and began experimenting within the Lantz cartoons, taking liberties with approved storyboards to apply modern techniques. Working largely on such commercial fare as Woody Woodpecker cartoons, he had very little latitude to create anything that was avant-garde, so he employed a hit-and-run approach, offering moments of filmic experimentation. Though the Woody cartoons might seem an unlikely vehicle for this, the wild and zany Woodpecker characterization provided a fairly ideal opportunity for Culhane's modernist mischief to blend in with the frenetic vigor of these short films. While some of his experiments, such as the fast-edits that comprise the "Figaro" sequence within *The Barber of Seville*, are very well-known and highly regarded by animation scholars, others have been largely unnoticed, such as the modern art renderings he hid within explosions in *The Loose Nut*. This presentation reveals these experiments and evaluates their effectiveness within the cartoons which Culhane directed at the Lantz studio from 1943 to 1946.

Please **RSVP** by noon, Oct 2, 08  
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