Len Lye

b. Leonard Charles Huia Lye

b. Christchurch, New Zealand, July 5, 1901
d. Warwick, Rhode Island, May 15, 1980

by Brett Kashmere

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Flip Sides of Len Lye: Direct Film / Cinema Direct

> *The least boring person who ever lived.*
>
> - Alistair Reid

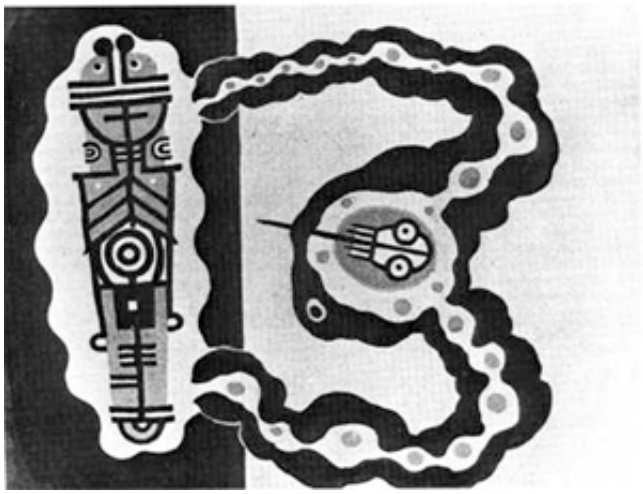
The New Zealand-born filmmaker, painter, kinetic sculptor, writer and genetic and experimental theorist Len Lye became a leading avant-garde artist in London and New York, bridging pre- and post-World War II movements and trends. Associated with many groundbreaking art groups, beginning with London's modernist Seven and Five Society in the 1920s, the International Surrealist Movement in the 1930s, and the Kinetic Art Movement in the 1960s, Lye is best remembered for his contributions to the development of hand-crafted abstract cinema. In the early 1930s he experimented with new colour processes such as Dufaycolor and Gasparcolor while pioneering "direct animation", a method of painting, scratching and stencilling directly onto motion picture celluloid. Aided by commissions from the British General Post Office (GPO), the Imperial Tobacco Company, Shell Motor Oil and Imperial Airways, his whimsical animated films of the mid- to late-1930s included original camera-less techniques, advertising slogans and dynamic musical rhythms. A fierce individualist and anarchistic thinker, Lye claimed that, "There has never been a great film unless it was created in the spirit of the experimental filmmaker." (1) When applied to his seldom seen but formally inventive war effort films, this statement illuminates Lye's under-recognised contribution to the British documentary movement.

Born at the turn of the 20th century in Christchurch, New Zealand, Lye studied briefly at the Wellington Technical Institute in 1915 and at Canterbury Art College in 1919 before setting sail overseas. Preternaturally restless and unsettled, he spent a year in the Polynesian islands of Samoa in 1923, where he encountered the American filmmaker Robert Flaherty, before being deported to Sydney, Australia, by the New Zealand colonial administration for living within an indigenous community. According to Roger Horrocks, "Lye worked as a quarry and building labourer, a carpenter's mater, a packer, a miner, and

a rail layer", as well as a farm hand while in Sydney. (2) These jobs, executed across a half-year, provided Lye the opportunity to further absorb his South Pacific experiences while reflecting upon and developing his artistic interests and theories. He saved up some money and spent the next several months exploring Sydney's cultural institutions. Somewhere among the city's libraries and museums Lye met the musician Jack Ellitt, who became a lifelong friend and occasional collaborator. Ellitt later composed and performed a two piano score at the premiere of the Lye's first film, *Tusalava* (1929), and assisted with the musical synchronisation of many subsequent films. (3)

Now 25 years old and anxious for his entrée into the modern art world, Lye "purchased" himself a job on a 22,000-ton steamship called *Euridipes*. Working his way around and up the Ocean as a coal trimmer, he arrived in London, England, in 1926. Upon meeting artists such as the painters Eric Kennington, John Aldridge and Nancy Nicholson, the printmaker Julian Trevelyan, and the writers Laura Riding and Robert Graves, Lye's career quickly took off. "Lye, the confident invader, made a dramatic entrance and within a year was exhibiting with leading London artists," Horrocks writes. (4) Backed by the avant-garde painter Ben Nicholson (also a New Zealander), Lye exhibited with London's famed Five and Seven Society in January 1927, and was later included in London's International Surrealist Exhibition in 1936.

It was also in London where Lye began doodling with the possibility of film. As Horrocks points out, "The idea that the revolution in modern art had still scarcely influenced the medium of film-making was very much in Lye's thoughts when he arrived in London in 1926." (5) *Tusalava* was completed a few years thereafter with the aid of a London Film Society grant. (6) Shot with a 35mm animation camera, *Tusalava* was inspired by the indigenous art of Australian, Polynesian and Maori cultures. The film, extremely cryptic, about "the beginnings of organic life," develops slowly over 9 minutes. Throughout its duration, over 4000 drawings of cellular forms continuously generate new shapes that grow and interact with one another across two distinct vertically formatted panels (one black, one white), evoking themes of birth, death, sex, and transformation. *Tusalava* (a Samoan word meaning "just the same") concludes with a pulsating spirographic pattern that, upon penetration by the tongue of an animal-like figure, elicits bolts of electricity before advancing upwards (towards the viewer) and consuming both halves of the frame.



Tusalava
(The Len Lye Foundation)

The film's fascination with biological, genetic and symbolic imagery presages Lye's 1968 lecture "The Absolute Truth of the Happiness Acid". According to Arthur Cantrill, this "complex three-hour presentation was in two parts: 'Art and the Body' and 'Art and the Genes.' It used films, slides and audio tapes, and needed the aid of three assistants. It was a performance as much as a talk." (7) The main focus of the lecture-screening was Lye's idiosyncratic theory of DNA, which he saw as the wellspring and pattern of artistic creation. In his formulation, quoting the art critic Clive Bell, "art lies in the genes". Aesthetic ideas are generated by our genetic make-up, which Lye illustrated by comparing images of Le Corbusier and Henry Moore's work with their respective facial structures. This indexical relationship between the essence of "selfness" and our corporeal reality accounts for Lye's creation of imagery and forms that represent bodily feelings and motion, as well as his keen interests in music (especially

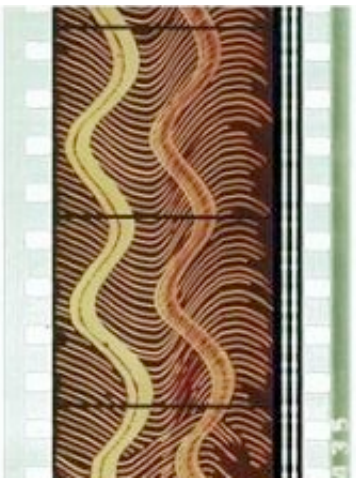
jazz) and dance. Lye's sense of movement was rooted in the physical, "the kinetic of the body's rhythms", not purely a matter of visual patterns. (8)

Preoccupation with rhythm has long united jazz and visual art, film and literature. In Jackson Pollock's breakthrough drip paintings, executed between 1947 and 1950, jazz-like elements of spontaneous composition, unframed duration, rhythmic line and tightly constructed, quickly rendered form pervade the surface. The painter Lee Krasner, Pollock's wife, describes that while painting he "Would get into grooves of listening to his jazz records – not just for days – day and night, day and night for three days running until you thought you would climb the roof… Jazz? He thought it was the only other really creative thing happening in this country." (9) Although Pollock and Krasner moved from Manhattan's East Village to a Long Island farmhouse in 1945, it's easy to imagine the youthful artist returning to his 8th Street studio after days and nights "floating across the tops of cities / contemplating jazz", (10) charged with the inspiration and energy to paint.

Like Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and other Beat writers, Pollock sought the illusion of a continuous present by imitating the expressive energy, emotion and immediacy of jazz. This is similarly true of Lye's work. A number of his films, including *N. or N.W.* (1937, with music by Fats Waller, Bob Howard and Benny Goodman), *Colour Flight* (1938, music by Red Nichols and his Five Pennies) and *Tal Farlow* (1980, featuring music by the eponymous guitarist) borrowed rhythmic cues directly from the jazz compositions they were synchronised to. Approximating swing or bop phrasings, these films exhibit asymmetrical, fractured and syncopated rhythms, foreshadowing Lye's collaborations with jazz groups at New York's Five Spot in the mid-1950s.

A multidisciplinary artist of divergent interests, (11) Lye's filmmaking career was marked by long intervals of inactivity. He didn't realise his second short, the marionette-puppet film, *Experimental Animation*, until 1934, leading to his first commission from Britain's General Post Office Film Unit. Hired by John Grierson to produce promotional films for the GPO, Lye developed his array of celluloid manipulation skills in the vicinity of talented documentarists like Alberto Cavalcanti, Humphrey Jennings, Paul Rotha, Harry Watt and Basil Wright, and, later, the animator Norman McLaren. Lye gives a brief description of direct animation:

> *It is the means by which you directly etch, that is, scratch with a needle, right into the celluloid, or paint right onto celluloid so that the color sticks to it. If you know animation you can control this type of direct designing on your film celluloid and create motions under control in a sequential way… But if you also synchronize the visual accenting with sound accenting of music with say, a rhythmic beat, then you've got something you can look at… One enhances the other, one sharpens up the other.* (12)



Beginning with *A Colour Box* (1935), which won a Medal of Honour at the 1935 International Cinema Festival in Brussels, and continuing until 1940, Lye fashioned a collection of expressive hand-tooled films, many of which illustrated methods rarely seen before in the cinematic medium. *Trade Tattoo* (1937) repurposes documentary footage that Lye then painted, animated text, and stencilled patterns on. The once discarded black-and-white material is thus transformed into a vibrant matrix for multi-layered imagery and polyrhythmic progression. *Rainbow Dance* (1936), an advertising film for the Post Office Savings Bank, combines original live action footage of a silhouetted dancer (Rupert Doone) with graphic backgrounds and cartoon drawings. "Painted and designed by Len Lye" and sponsored by Imperial Airways, *Colour Flight* (1938) utilised the

A Colour Box

emerging Gasparcolor technology as a fluid template for plane, fan, wave and bird shapes, exotic music, playful sound/shape conjunctions, and garish batiks of yellow, blue, red and orange. After disappearing into entirely graphic abstraction, planes and clouds re-emerge at film's end with a brief advertising message. *Swinging the Lambeth Walk* (1939), a four-minute, hand-painted Dufaycolor film "with a colour accompaniment by Len Lye", matches visual motifs to musical instruments: diagonals introduce piano phrases, circles express drum beats, wavy horizontals represent guitars licks, vertical lines map base parts, etc. Primary red, blue and deep green colour fields are rendered frameless by upwardly cascading kite shapes, luminous tapered stripes, and batik-like patterns.

Akin to Oskar Fischinger's fine art advertising films, Lye's cinematic "figures of motion" sublimated their commercial purpose by emphasising geometric and all-over abstraction and direct authorial inscription. As Tess Takahashi notes, filmmakers like Lye, McLaren and Harry Smith saw direct animation as "a way for the artist to imbue film with the imprint of the filmmaker's essential self… [This] self, represented for Lye by the then-new discovery of DNA, was transmitted in the process of direct animation." (13) Characterised by an obsessive fascination with colour, pattern, texture and movement these films elude textual analysis and descriptive language, preferring the non-verbal register of synaesthesic perception. Like Stan Brakhage's hand-painted *oeuvre*, Lye's films strive toward a condition of pure cinema. This focus on medium-specificity and formal concerns limits the range of possible (literal) interpretations, and has been described as "cold rationalism" by the avant-garde film diarist, Jonas Mekas. (14)

During the war years and into the post-war period Lye ceased his experimental filmmaking. Resuming activity in the early '50s, Lye collaborated with Ian Hugo, producing special colour effects for *Bells of Atlantis* (1952, based on Anaïs Nin's book *The House of Incest*), and with Cecile Starr on the film *Autumn Leaves* (1953). *Color Cry* (1952-53), the first direct film Lye made while living in New York's Greenwich Village, was likely inspired by the coterminous explosion of American avant-garde cinema and calls for racial integration. (15) As with all of Lye's direct films, *Color Cry* (also known as *The Fox Chase*, after the Sonny Terry blues song used on the soundtrack) employs music as a ground for organising motion. Utilising the photogram technique, multiple objects and materials, including transparent gels, textured fibres and fabrics, were placed over strips of 16mm raw stock and flash exposed. The resultant passages of dark rolling bars, softly focused ovular shapes and triangular swatches; swaying bands of solid colour, meshes, check, dot and tartan patterns; and other micro-designs, imbue the film with a fluid, breezy feeling. However, unlike many of his experimental animations *Color Cry* contains a palpable social subtext, suggested in the title and materialised in Terry's ragged harmonica rhythms and improvised vocal chants and Lye's choice of colours (crimson, black and mustard hues) and objects (particularly saw blades and string, which, when enlarged, resembles rope). According to Horrocks, Lye interpreted Terry's lyrics "as the feelings of a black slave fleeing a Southern lynch mob." (16) It's not surprising, given Lye's own transitory, working-class, cultural-outsider status, that he would feel empathy towards the African-American situation.

* * *

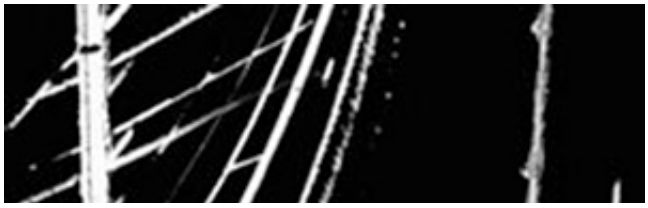
Lye's early handmade films did not embody from the didactic, institutional form of the GPO's more widely circulated productions during its formative period; nor did Lye share Grierson's social-democratic corporatist ideology. Conversely, Grierson's notion of documentary as the "creative treatment of reality", coupled with his strong sense of social responsibility may well have focused Lye's thinking when he began directing instructional films for Britain's Ministry of Information during the Second World War. His theory

"Individual Happiness Now", developed in 1941 and refined throughout the war years, provides an important context for these films. Stressing spontaneity, individuality and artistic experience, Individual Happiness Now was conceived as an alternative to the usual wartime appeals to nationalism or religion. Though Lye's documentaries were very much the product of their wartime context, these uncommonly rhythmic films contain distinct *auteur* traces, experimental techniques and technological innovations that run counter to their training and propaganda objectives.

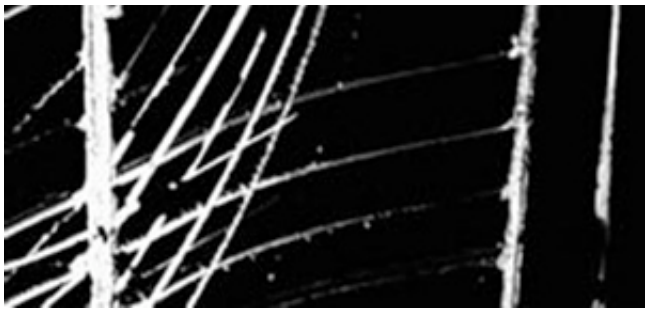
Lye's *Work Party* (1942), a slice-of-life film about women working in a munitions factory, was criticised at the time of its release for not having enough "propaganda value." (17) Anticipating the *cinéma vérité* movement, *Work Party* featured hand-held camerawork and an unobtrusive, observational style. *When the Pie was Opened* (1941), a film about coping with food rations, included surrealist diversions, an imaginative, playful storyline, and visual and aural puns. *Newspaper Train* (1941), about the importance of newspapers in keeping people informed and in countering Nazi propaganda, mixed live-action and animated sections and employed an unusual, disjunctive editing style. It was also the first film to print two separate soundtracks side-by-side, one for dialogue and one for sound effects. *Kill or Be Killed* (1942), a taut psychological thriller pitting German and British soldiers against one another in a test of skill and dexterity, is considered one of the best war effort films. Inserting dramatic elements into a military training film, *Kill or Be Killed* demonstrates Lye's ability to formulate new genres or genre hybrids while expanding documentary parameters.

Cameramen at War (1943), a compilation of footage taken by World War I and World War II newsreel cameramen, was Lye's last assignment for Britain's Ministry of Information. Constructed on the editing bench from archival material, the film highlights his decisive editing technique, specialised ability and professional approach. At the same time Lye must have felt some personal kinship with his subjects, who were likewise pressed into documentary film out of wartime circumstances.

Lye's contribution to the history of documentary film continued with his work for Louis de Rouchemont's international newsreel program, *The March of Time*. From 1944 until 1951 Lye worked as a field director for the series, directing short documentaries and newsreel sequences and gathering footage for the monthly news magazines. After relocating from London to New York in 1944 to direct a six-part *March of Time* assignment on Basic English with the literary critic I.A. Richards, Lye suddenly found himself in the new burgeoning centre of modern art. Galvanised by the creative energy of New York's art scene Lye spent most of the 1950s writing and developing commercial and non-commercial film projects. Synthesising his work in experimental and documentary film, *Rhythm* (1957) combines amateur and professional modes of production. Made using documentary outtakes, *Rhythm* pioneered TV commercial jump cutting. Conjoining percussive African music with black and white footage of the Chrysler assembly line, *Rhythm* was considered so prescient that it won the New York TV Art Director's Award. (18) The rapid-fire 60-second collage is punctuated by drum beats and hole-punches, which mimic the tasks of the industrial machines and circular car parts from the source footage. Signalling Lye's blue-collar background and another subtle sign of his attendance to racial issues, the film includes and abbreviates the image of a winking African-American factory worker.



Lye ceased making films from the late '50s to the late '60s, mainly from lack of financial support. Turning toward a different kind of motion, he instead devoted most of his artistic energies to sculpture. He became a leading figure in the kinetic art movement



Free Radicals

during this phase. Made from bounding steel, Lye's first kinetic sculpture, *Fountain* was exhibited at New York's Leo Castelli Gallery in 1961, and his *Tangible Motion Sculptures* were shown at the Museum of Modern Art later that year. Lye's final completed films, *Free Radicals* (1979), *Particles in Space* (1979) and *Tal Farlow* (1980) can be seen as an extension of his sculptural practice. All three were made without a camera by scratching directing into 16mm black leader, a subtractive technique he first developed 20 years earlier. Originally released in 1958, the definitive, revised version of *Free Radicals* was completed in 1979 with the assistance of Paul Barnes and Steve Jones. (19) An assured, signature work that Stan Brakhage called "an almost unbelievably immense masterpiece", (20) *Free Radicals* synchronises etched hieroglyphs, squiggly horizontal lines and verticals of varying thickness to energetic drum music from The Bagirmi Tribe of Africa. Nothing in the film is static. "White ziggle-zag-splutter scratches", inscribed using a variety of tools including arrowheads and saw-teeth, appear abruptly, leap, quiver, and dance alongside the beat, then vanish suddenly. Occasionally the flat picture plane is transformed into a three-dimensional space as fluid, rough-edged wiry shapes appear to rotate, as though circled by a camera/eye. At times one denotes the outline of quickly passing hill covered or jagged mountainous landscape as the line-play slips between suggestive figuration and scratch abstraction.

Lesser-known companion piece to *Free Radicals*, *Particles in Space* is a 4-minute arrangement of cosmically inspired markings, broken lines and dot matrices. Also referencing his bounding steel compositions, the film's unique title sequences pair spinning letters with sounds from Lye's kinetic sculptures. More nebulous and freeform than *Free Radicals*, *Particles in Space* is energised by waves of tiny handmade dashes that float, spark, flicker and disintegrate to the sounds of steel drums. The 2-minute *Tal Farlow*, completed by assistants after Lye's death,asserts his credentials as a jazz-film maker. Lines that resemble Venetian blinds visually supplement music by the guitarist Farlow. Swaying, supporting and departing from the beat, the scratch patterns multiply outwards from the centre, then retreat, join and disappear. In true Lye form, the film seems to end as quickly as it began, leaving the viewer thirsty for more.

* * *

Lye's manifold film output - 15 (or so) experimental films ranging from one to nine minutes in length, a number of episodes and documentaries made for *The March of Time* and the British Ministry of Information, a handful of film ads, uncompleted projects, collaborations and visual music accompaniments - demonstrate both the variety and coherence of his artistic vision. Throughout his career Lye tested the limits of both experimental and documentary cinema. Although Lye's documentaries often belied his anarchistic spirit and leftist values, it is important to recognise that these films were collaborative productions financed by a government information ministry at a time of war. Working within a compartmentalised production system where every staff member was paid the same and given equal credit, it may be inaccurate to claim Lye "authored" these films. While his work in documentary film was short-lived and ephemeral its traces can still be located in the *cinema verité* movements of the following decades.

A cultural outsider with the determination, intuition and insight to move within several artistic and industrial circles simultaneously, Lye's films opened up space for an art of documentary and, alternately, the possibility of an accessible avant-garde. By inventing

new ways of making films without a camera, expert knowledge or extensive equipment, he initiated a field of artisanal, self-sufficient screen practice that continues to grow and thrive. (21) Importantly, his innovative modernist films reveal that experimental cinema can be a fun, ecstatic and pleasurable experience, self-rendering a cinema of limited means that is no less valuable.

Endnotes

1. Len Lye, "Is Film Art?", *Film Culture* 29, Summer 1963, p. 39.
2. Roger Horrocks, *Len Lye: A* Biography, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2001, p. 68. Horrocks' book is the most complete study of Lye's life and work written to date.
3. That score has since been lost. *Tusalava* continues to be distributed as a silent film.
4. Roger Horrocks, *Len Lye: A Biography,* p. 82.
5. *Len Lye: A Personal Mythology*,Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, 1980, p. 25.
6. In 1929 the German Dadaist painter and filmmaker Hans Richter ran a filmmaking workshop for the London Film Society, in which Lye, Basil Wright and another visiting artist, Sergei Eisenstein, took part.
7. For a thorough firsthand recount of Lye's lecture see Arthur Cantrill, "'The Absolute Truth of the Happiness Acid'", *Senses of Cinema* (2002)
8. Ibid.
9. Lee Krasner cited in Francine Du Plessix and Cleve Gray, "Who Was Jackson Pollock? ", *Art in America*, May-June 1967, p. 51. This comment echoes Lye's remark that jazz is "the best popular art form we've got." Lye quoted in Roger Horrocks, *Len Lye: A Biography*, p. 410.
10. Allen Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*, City Lights, San Francisco, 1956, p. 9.
11. One famous example of Lye's multidisciplinary embrace was his 1967 New York State campus tour with the composer John Cage, the choreographer Merce Cunningham, the poet Robert Creeley, the painter Jack Tworkov, the film artist Stan Vanderbeek, and the electrical engineer Billy Kluver. From 1966-69 (excluding 1968), Lye also taught a course at New York University titled "The Art of Vision".
12. Lye quoted in Ray Thorburn, "Interview with Len Lye," *Art International* XIX, April 1975, p. 65.
13. Tess Takahashi, "Meticulously, Recklessly Worked Upon: Direct Animation, the Auratic and the Index" in Chris Gehman and Steve Reinke(eds), *The Sharpest Point: Animation at the End of Cinema*, YYZ Books, Toronto, 2005, p. 171.
14. Jonas Mekas, *Movie Journal: The Rise of a New American Cinema*, 1959-1971,

Collier, New York, 1972, p. 84. In the same passage, titled "The Mozarts of Cinema", Mekas praises the films of 8 year-old David Wise for their "awkward, budding lyricism".

15. In a controversial 1955 U.S. Supreme Court decision, Justice Earl Warren finally ordered the desegregation of America's schools with all "deliberate speed".

16. Roger Horrocks, annotated description of "Color Cry," Govett-Brewster Art Gallery website

17. Roger Horrocks, *Len Lye: A Biography*, p. 196.

18. The award was taken back, however, when it was discovered that *Rhythm* never even aired on television.

19. *Free Radicals* won the $5000 second prize at the Belgian International Experimental Competition, part of the 1958 Brussels World Fair.

20. Incidentally, one of Brakhage's last films, *The Chinese Series* (2003), was made by moistening black 35mm film emulsion with his saliva and scratching it off with his fingernails.

21. See, for instance, the films of Thorsten Fleisch, David Gatten, Sandra Gibson, Courtney Hoskins, Stephanie Maxwell and Izabella Pruska-Oldenhoff, as well as the multi-projector performances of Bruce McClure, silt, and Luis Recoder.

Filmography

For a complete, annotated filmography, click here

Len Lye

Tusalava (1929, 35mm, b&w, silent, 9 minutes)
Experimental Animation (also *Peanut Vendor*) (1934, 35mm, b&w, sound, 3 minutes)
Full Fathom Five (1935, 35mm, colour, sound, 9 minutes)
A Color Box (1935, 35mm, colour, sound, 4 minutes)
Kaleidoscope (1935, 35mm, colour, sound, 4 minutes)
The Birth of the Robot (1936, 35mm, colour, sound, 7 minutes)
Rainbow Dance (1936, 35mm, colour, sound, 5 minutes)
Trade Tattoo (1937, 35mm, colour, sound, 5 minutes)
N. or N.W. (1937, 35mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes)
Colour Flight (1938, 35mm, colour, sound, 4 minutes)
The March of Time (1938-1951; contributing director and cameraman)
Swinging the Lambeth Walk (1939, 35mm, colour, sound, 4 minutes)
Musical Poster #1 (1940, 35mm, colour, sound, 3 minutes)
Newspaper Train (1941, 35mm, b&w, sound, 5 minutes)
When the Pie Was Opened (1941, 35mm, b&w, sound, 8 minutes)

Work Party (also *Factory Family*) (1942, 35mm, b&w, sound, 7 minutes)
Kill or Be Killed (1942, 35mm, b&w, sound, 18 minutes)
Cameramen at War (1943, 35mm, b&w, sound, 17 minutes)
Color Cry (1952-53, 16mm, colour, sound, 3 minutes)
Rhythm (1957, 16mm, b&w, sound, 1 minute)
Free Radicals (1979, revision of 1958 version; 16mm, b&w, sound, 4 minutes)
Particles in Space (1979, 16mm, b&w, sound, 4 minutes)
Farlow (1980, completed after Lye's death by his assistant, Steve Jones; 16mm, b&w, sound, 2 minutes)

Films About Len Lye

Doodlin': Impressions of Len Lye (Keith Griffiths, 1987, video, colour / b&w, 50 minutes)

Flip and Two Twisters (Shirley Horrocks, 1995, 16mm, colour / b&w, 48 minutes)

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Articles in *Senses of Cinema*

The wit of the wobble: Len Lye and the metaphysics of eccentricity by Robert Nelson
Article on an exhibition at Melbourne's Monash University Museum of Art, of Lye's films, kinetic sculpture and more.

The Absolute Truth of the Happiness Acid by Arthur Cantrill
Article on Lye's 1968 "Happiness Acid" lecture-performance. A Len Lye filmography can be found at the tail of this article.

Web Resources

Govett-Brewster Art Gallery / The Len Lye Foundation
Collection and archive of modernist filmmaker and kinetic sculptor Len Lye. Includes comprehensive information on Lye's films, including a list of international distributors.

In and Out of History: A Century of Len Lye
Article by Roger Horrocks

Len Lye: A Personal Mythology
Article by Leonard Bell

The Early Years in London
Article by Anne Kirker

Len Lye's Sculpture and the Body of His Work
Article by Wynston Curnow

From *No Trouble*
Article by Len Lye

An overview and in-depth analyses of some of Lye's key film works.
Article by Leonard Bell

The Man Who Kicked The Can
Review of Roger Horrocks' biography of Lye, by Tessa Laird (originally published in the New Zealand Listener, 9/6/01)

New Zealand Electric Poetry Centre
Includes links and the text of more than 40 of Lye's own poems.

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