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Animated documentaries can tell stories that would be impossible to bring to the screen with live action. German animator Katrin Rothe has used the medium to its full potential in her 100-minute documentary *Johnny & Me*.

The film tells the story of the German antifascist and pacifist John Heartfield, a 20th Century visual artist who pioneered the use of art as a political weapon. Some of his most famous photo montages were anti-Nazi and anti-fascist statements. He rose to number 5 on the Gestapo's most wanted list, working inside and in the shadow of the Third Reich. His only crime was his "art as a weapon" that used integrity and humor to reveal the fascist lies of dictators.

John Heartfield is considered the father of modern photo montage, a form of collage.

Who is the *Me* in *Johnny & Me*? She is Stephanie, a graphic artist plagued by a creative crisis and self doubt. She becomes fascinated by John Heartfield's work, which she discovers at an exhibition. Journeying through a time tunnel, she ends up in a studio where the artist, who has become a cartoon figure, takes her on a journey through his eventful life. A loving friendship develops between the two colleagues. As a result Stephanie takes up scissors and paper and begins to create again.

Director/animator Katrin Rothe, a two-time Adolph Grimme Award winner, loves to work with paper and cut-out animation. When I asked her why she wanted to bring the story of an almost forgotten political cut-out artist to life on the screen, she told me "I know his anti-Nazi images . . . His anti war and anti fascist motives are still (or once again) important . . . I really have to make an animated biography about him. I chose a female perspective - from a graphic designer. What can we learn from this pacifist communist? There is something I need to tell about this 'old white man'".

Johnny & I will premier at the Annecy International Animation Festival on Wednesday, 12 June at 14:30 (2:30 PM) in Pathé 2. After the screening you will be able to meet Katrin and 18 members of her team who helped bring this remarkable story to life.

I love good animation and storytelling and am a history buff so I highly recommend *Johnny & I*. I also recommend that you check out Katrin's previous film, about the Russian Revolution: *1917 Movie* (<http://1917movie.com>).

See you in the screening room at Annecy on 12 June. I am looking forward to seeing *Johnny & Me* a second time.