

## **Doodle Film – 1970**

*Doodle Film* was my first film. I had joined the National Film Board of Canada in the spring of 1967, and worked for about a year as assistant director and assistant editor on a film by the director Mort Ransen. It was during the editing process of that film that I got the idea for *Doodle Film*. I had always been a compulsive doodler, and during the long hours I spent in the editing room with the director, who was editing his own film, I began doodling on whatever paper was handy, pasting many of my creations up on the wall. Eventually this got Mr. Ransen's nerves. Not only was I cluttering up the creative environment, he found that he could never find a blank piece of paper on which to make notes. It was then that it occurred to me that my doodles, and the act of doodling, might provide the basis for a film. My first thought was to try to produce a sort of Shakespearean "Ages of Man," chronicling the various images an individual might commit to paper from childhood to senescence.

Ultimately I conceived of a character, a kind of Everyman named David Watt (I endowed him with my own initials), whose doodling evolved into a counter-cultural activity, characterized by the defacing of bureaucratic forms and consumer products. (I did much of my research in the closet where the NFB's own bureaucratic forms were stored.) In the end the doodles morphed into a simple smiling face that began to appear anywhere and everywhere, once David Watt himself had disappeared. (I conceived of the face before it became ubiquitous in the real world, but by the time the film came out it was indeed everywhere).

The film appeared in a number of festivals, and was distributed internationally as a theatrical short and as an educational film with sociological implications. On one occasion an NFB distribution representative was puzzled to find it paired with a pornographic film. His Australian friend solved the mystery by pointing to the rep's lap. "That's your doodle, mate!" he declared. Never judge a film by its name.

*Doodle Film* is available through the National Film Board of Canada, although it is not at present accessible on line.