

Art for Lawyers by Rory Waudby Tolley – Interview

30 AUGUST 2017 // INTERVIEWS



Steve Henderson

EDITOR



Like 0

The eclectic visuals and comedic timing of Rory Waudby-Tolley's RCA graduation film *Mr Madilla* created a stir when it hit the festival circuit last year. The documentary pulled apart the big questions of life, the universe and existence in a carefree and humorous way. Rory returns with *Art for Lawyers*, in a similar vein to his previous film but as an actual documentary rory finds new subjects but the same fast and fun approach to answering big questions, in this case the role of art in a corporate environment.

Featuring a couple of unforgettable musical numbers the film has been released online today. We caught up with Rory Waudby-Tolley to find out more about the film below.

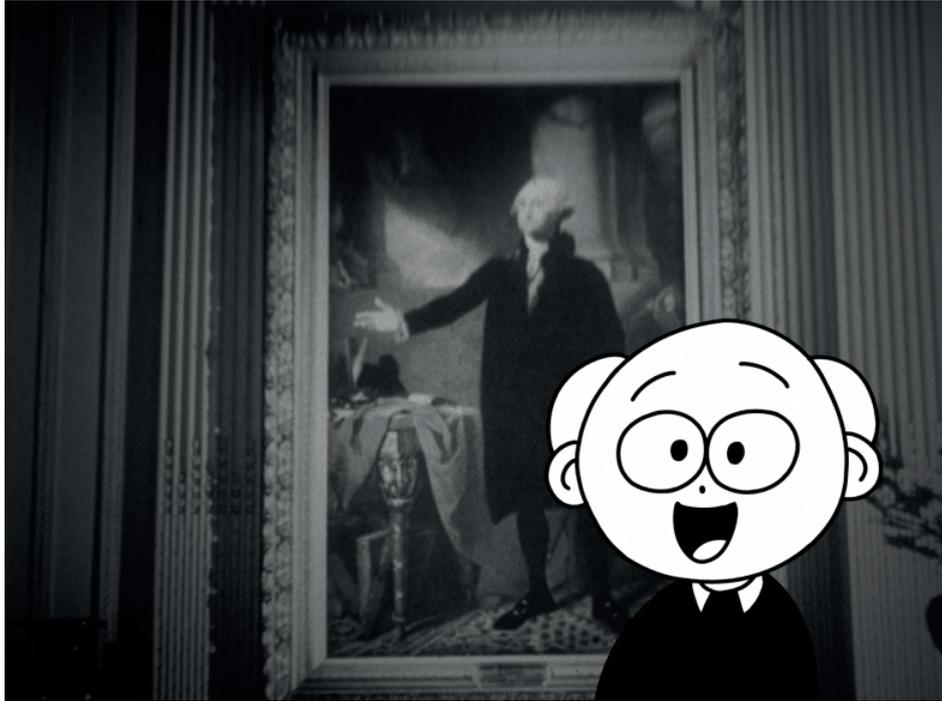
How do you view the boundary between fiction and non fiction and how did this influence the process behind making *Art for Lawyers*?

“

I don't really think there is a strict boundary between documentary and fiction so I found it fine really. Mr Madilla used the format of a documentary because it was playing with the idea of reality, and messing about with the format of a film about the making of a film. Which I guess this film does too, but is more rooted in reality.

I think the main difference is when you are working with real people you have to be a bit more responsible with how you portray them. That didn't end up being a problem at all because everyone was lovely and had a great sense of humour. It makes it easier to include myself in the film so there is still always someone to laugh at.

I wanted to deal with my own prejudices and preconceptions going into the film – are the lawyers all going to be boring and serious? How can I call myself an artist? How did I get into this mess? I thought that the most inappropriate opening would be kids TV style theme-tune so I got that out of my system at the beginning. The film is then essentially my self-indulgent journey to receive validation from a bunch of people I don't know to become comfortable enough to say, yeah, I'm an artist! I know what I'm doing!



The film suggests that the residency contacted you, did Mr Madilla influence their decision to hire you and we're they confused by it's documentary style?

“

I got a voicemail message from Maggie O'Regan, of InSitu, their art consultant, who had seen Mr Madilla at the RCA show, and asked if I was up for trying something out. They have an art collection and a programme which includes a sculpture changeover scheme, but the purpose of the residency is to try to engage their employees with the art itself.

I don't think the style confused them, they were pretty open to all ideas at the beginning, and the idea of doing an interview style documentary seemed to make sense in terms of including more people from around the building. Also they were aware it was going to be humorous and playful in tone, which helped a lot. I put out an email call-out and held a couple of workshops to meet people around the building who would be interested in the project to basically record a bunch of conversations and see where the film went. I ended up speaking to staff from around the company – lawyers, security guards, the guys in the post room... It was great discovering everyone's little personal relationship with art and creativity, whether positive or negative.



Tell me more about how the relationship with “The Lawyers” worked. It seems odd that they wanted an animation rather than something more public facing.

“

I had this preconception at the start that the corporate environment would be somehow a bit bland, but the Art Committee at Pinsent Masons is made up of people who are really keen to commission stuff that is a bit more ‘out there’, which leads to some really interesting conversations around the office about the art. With the residency, they’re providing a platform for artists to continue to make work, without compromising on integrity but engaging with them at the same time. I think they were very open to trying something different, and it’s great they were willing to take a risk. They had commissioned photographers and fine artists before, but they had never had a film-maker.

We had a few workshops, an exhibition and screening at their offices, showing the film and a bunch of supporting drawings, including designs made by employees over lunch one day. It was actually amazing how cool they were with letting me do whatever I wanted. There was a strong degree of trust, which was part of wanting to ensure it wasn’t compromised by interference. As a result, I didn’t show anyone anything until it was completely finished, so to finally reveal the finished film was a bit daunting but everyone seemed to like it!