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# Case Study: Discovery Film Festival, Dundee

## Shorts for Tinies - films for 0 - 3 year olds

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### About the Festival:

[Discovery Film Festival](#) is a children's film festival based at Dundee Contemporary Arts Centre that takes place over 2 weeks every October with screenings that tour other venues around Scotland. The festival curates programmes for all young audiences from toddlers through to 15 - 19 year olds.

One of the most successful strands of the programme is their [Shorts for Tinies](#) - a programme recommended for 0 - 3 year olds that combines watching short films, creative making, group activity and movement around the cinema screen.

### Shorts for Tinies:

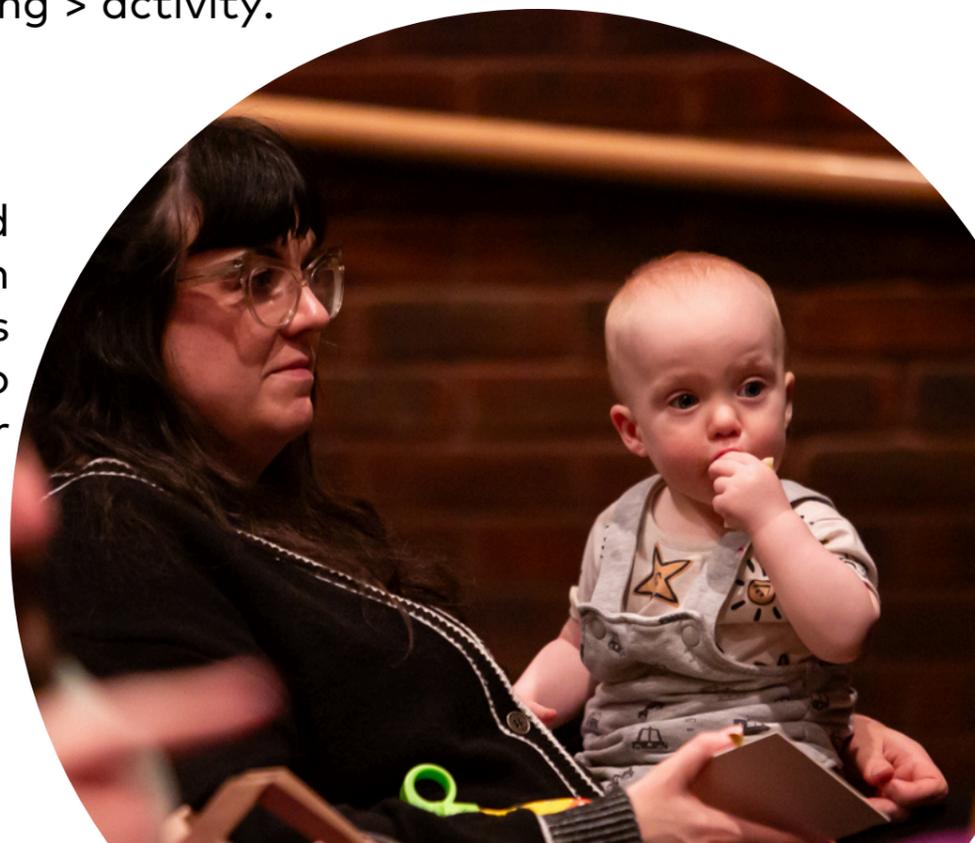
This programme grew out of an awareness that another Discovery programme aimed at ages 3+ was attracting a much younger audience who were unable to engage in the 45 - 60 min viewing time.

Alongside this, the DCA Learning Programme runs a well-established Family Art Lab art-making workshop. Initially advertised for children aged 5+ and accompanying grown-ups, it has become 'For all ages' and caters for under 5s and creative making within family groups.

The aim of Shorts for Tinies was to combine this creative making with film viewing, reflecting the DCA's Learning programme ethos of 'see; think; make; do'. A Shorts for Tinies event features elements of interactive sound, music, movement and art making inspired by and linked directly to the short films and takes the format of introduction > screening > activity.

### Age-range:

The Shorts for Tinies programme is aimed at engaging 0 - 3 year olds together with their carers. It is advertised for 'wee ones under 5' with parents/carers - but with no mess, no glitter, no glue to be suitable for the in-cinema setting.



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## Film Curation:

The Short for Tinies are curated annually from the wider Discovery Shorts for Wee Ones and Family programmes and licenced for 12 months.

The following short films are the most popular to date with this age group:

- Der Vogel und Das Blatt (The Bird and The Leaf), Dir Lena Von Dohren
- Animanimals, Dir Julia Okker
- Mobile, Filmakademie Baden-Wuerttemberg

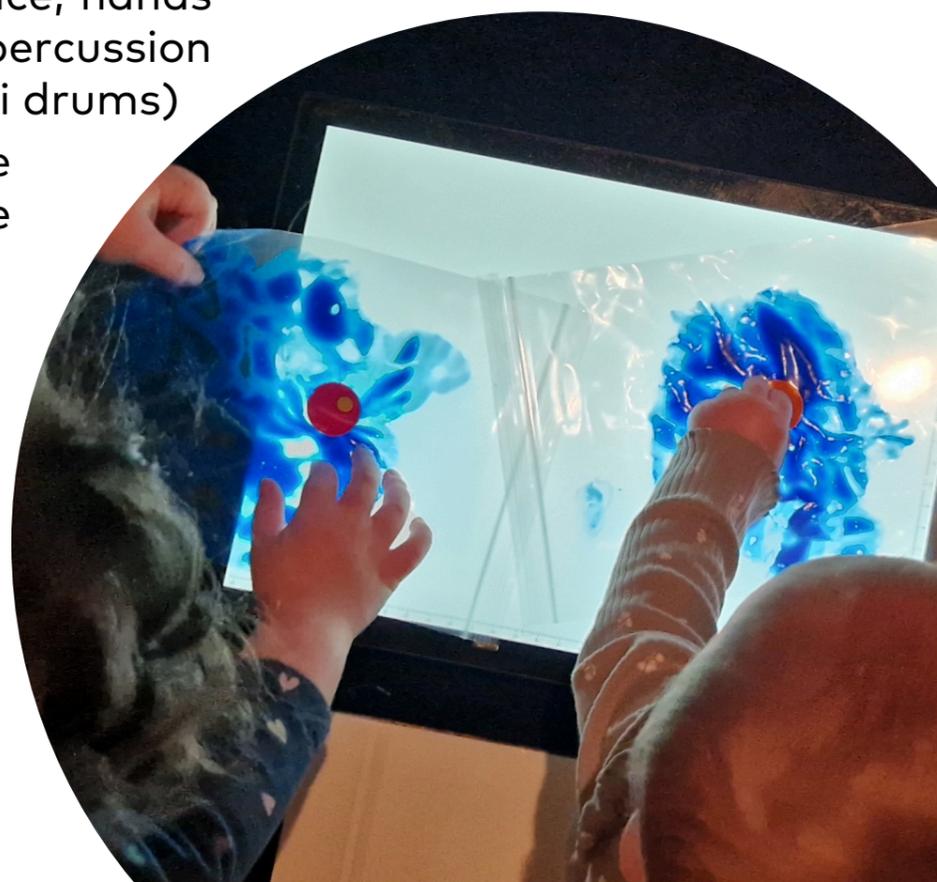
They resonate with this age as they are beautifully realised animal characters who display a wide range of emotions and non-verbal communication; the stories are short, clear and meaningful; the soundtracks (Foley and music) are hugely engaging but also have quiet pause points; characters demonstrate agency and in each overcome a challenge; the films are not too long.

## Additional activity:

The events organised as part of the shorts programme benefit from input from an in-house Art Therapist who has helped to develop a wider range of activities for in-cinema use. Activities are planned to fit with the theme or story of each short film. The activity is framed around the learning of one of the **3Cs (colour, camera, character)** or **3Ss (story, setting, sound)** [Film Education tool](#).

Types of activities include:

- C for COLOUR, CHARACTER and S for SETTING - collages using A4 laminated sheets with stickers, sticky vinyl or pre-cut shapes that can be assembled on a lap in the cinema. Alternatively, they can be stuck onto a scene painted on fabric at the front of the screen, or hanging from the cinema handrails.
- C of CHARACTER and S for SOUND – Create your own soundtrack with your own voice, hands and body or using a box of simple percussion instruments (shakers, tambourines, mini drums)
- Movement – using your body to make shapes or movements; using fabric like scarves to wave
- Activity sheets – A3 or A4 simple making activities for 0-3s that link to a film for families to take home, [examples here](#).



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## Creating the right environment:

The programme is run in the DCA's smallest screen that seats 74 people. The seating is unallocated with the offer of booster seats for toddlers. The lights are dimmed but the cinema is not in total darkness. The audience are free to move around and prams can be taken inside the cinema and parked safely to the left of the screen.

## Pricing:

DCA run a Donate-What-You-Can approach for this programme, varying from £0 - £8 in order to improve access within the community to this type of programming.

## Marketing insights:

Bespoke marketing assets are designed for each iteration of the Discovery Film Festival and used throughout the campaign, including a printed leaflet that is distributed via a door-drop to local postcodes. They also produce a series of 4-sheet posters that are posted throughout the city, run a wide email campaign targeting the DCA's festival and general family audiences, and push it through connections to local schools and nurseries. They also run a press campaign, always gaining coverage in the local press and often further afield on platforms such as The List. The programme is also promoted through the cinema's regular family communication channels, including a monthly Family Activity Calendar which is downloadable from the website and printed materials are distributed directly to families through other DCA family activity, both onsite at DCA and offsite in community centres and parks throughout the year.

## Main challenges:

The main challenges are sourcing short films under 6 or 7 minutes duration suitable for 0 - 3 and funding staff. A Shorts for Tinies session requires 2 members of the Learning Team, or two Freelance Artist Tutors who have been trained up to plan, prepare and deliver.

The prep time includes watching the films, selecting the most suitable films for 0-3s and planning appropriate activities for in-cinema use linked to each film. A session also requires a Projectionist and Front of House.



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## Biggest success:

These sessions provide a unique first cinema experience for families. There is a big demand for activity for under 5s that is inclusive, high quality and free and feedback from parents and caregivers at these sessions is that the sessions are valued and very much enjoyed. This programme has also been proven to support early years development.

## Positive impact on early years development:

This programme has also been proven to support early years development and family cohesion via a research partnership with University Of Dundee carried out by the DCA Art Therapist Vicky Armstrong. Impacts of the programme include:

- It's a shared experience: making art is a lovely way to feel connected to each other and it gives a focus for lots of shared looking and shared goals which helps infants feel attuned to their primary carers. This shared experience is good for infants' attachments and wellbeing and has also been shown to improve the parents' feelings of wellbeing.
- Brain development: watching short films interspersed with art making / expressive activity, allows little ones to have lots of new sensory experiences with different textures, shapes and colours.
- Motor skills and sense of agency: it lets children practice new motor skills, and allows them to understand that they are able to make change in the world as they create, make marks, colours, sounds. This builds their sense of agency and their sense of self.
- Observational skills and confidence: they are learning observational skills for watching, thinking and preparing for talking about what they see in films as they grow up, and learning about navigating new kinds of places and spaces.

Parents and caregivers also feedback that the Shorts for Tinies sessions give them confidence in talking about film using the 3Cs and 3Ss tool and in leading creative activity at home.

## Contact:

For more information about Discovery and Shorts for Tinies contact the DCA's Cinema and Young Audiences Coordinator Amaya Banuelos Marco  
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