



# The Butterfly

ANDREI KHRZHANOVSKY

1972

The Butterfly (1972) This ten minute animation, about a young boy capturing a butterfly and learning respect for nature is eerily beautiful as it relays a message many of us our taught in our youth. Drawn like an exquisite painting, Khrzhanovsky plays with styles and aesthetics as he takes the little boy from a realistic city scape, into first a luscious oasis and then into an ever evolving dreamscape. The visuals look akin to rotoscope as all scenes, from the typical to the illusory are drawn with such a realistic touch.

The butterfly first enters the little boy's life, casting a shadow across a room filled with military toys. The boy turns to the window and his first response to beauty is to capture and own it. With this moment Khrzhankovsky's view on social values is made apparent. The violence that is celebrated is made insidious by the image of a young boy, in a small room surrounded by emblems of war. As the young boy leaves his room to chase the butterfly, we become immersed in the city Khrzhanovsky has created. It is a believable Soviet scape: identical tower blocks fill the area, the only artistry to be found is in the form of beautiful but sinister adverts and a display in a shop window. This display exemplifies

the film's themes: the futility of trapped beauty. The display, an artificial and untouchable thing, is the only place of vibrancy inside the city. It also shows where the young boy learned his propensity to catch and keep. When the young boy enters a dream the tone changes. The butterfly grows large and captures him, but does not overpower him, instead introducing him to the delights of nature.

It becomes a visually stunning and almost hypnotic spectacle as the little boy first flies through the air, carried in a net by the butterfly, with a bird's eye view of the fields. When the boy is dropped down into the waters, Khrzhanovsky displays the extent of his artistry and talents as he shows a stunning underwater world that quickly and seamlessly transitions into the boy's awakening and visions of a night sky. Khrzhanovsky's aptitude for movement as an animator is second to none: convincingly he shows the twitching of butterfly wings, the elegance of flight, the jerkiness of machines and wonder of human motion. The Butterfly is a beautiful and touching parable, reducing the viewer to a child. It is also a testament to the capacity of animation.