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GRADUATION PROPOSAL PIET ZWART INSTITUTE 2011

1- DRAWING, ANIMATION

Drawing is a technique I've been developping over the past five years. My first three years have been based on an academic learning of drawing. This represents an accurate analysis of the model in response to a very careful study. It concerns the precise calculation of the proportions and the observation of values and lines.

Drawing is a way to create a sens of depth and atmosphere out of flat elements. This is a science that requires observation to translate real nature. Observing all the time, this is how we learn animation. An animator wants to know what looks good and what's people like and this implies a continuing study of the world around him. This involves drawing. According to me, drawing implements my ideas and clearly translates what I have in mind, this is exercise for a restless imagination. Animation is the continuity of drawing adding a pinch of magic which create the illusion of life. Drawing is a technique I really care about, something that I want to push further. First, I think that drawing is a strenght that we find fewer and fewer but it is also a way, to communicate my ideas and to tell my stories. I really appreciate clumsiness, energy, and random of traditionnal drawing. More specifically, drawing is the result of a controlled rythm between the eye, the hand and the layout.

In observation drawing, the eye is far more important than the brain, *my old teacher used to tell me that I should try to forget what Ialready know and draw as if I was discovering what I have in front of me, as if I was a child.* The organic and sensitive value of hand drawing represents its strenght. In my opinion, the computer represents an obstacle between the paper and the pen which make it far harder to manage. The fact that paper is physical is something very important to me. The contact of the pencil on paper enables me to manage the energy of the line. This is also a way to leave a real trace of me and my work. Here the machine takes control of something that doesn't always benefit to me. That's why I prefere using computer differently, it implies to combinate hand drawing with digital.

Actually, I considere the computer as a post-production work. Once I have all the «analogue» material required, I feel that digital is a new step to enhance and polish my work. Computer does not equal the quality of traditonnal drawing. The charm and the sensitivity of the pencil goes beyond the machine. It has a unique grain that I never found with the pen tablet. Analogue means keeping the simplicity and the direct link between the product and its creator. Analogue keeps track and sensitivity and then, digital enables to developp many options from there. This is a tool that I use to test, to step back, to understand.

The computer camera is very powerful to control camera movements and it adds the z axis to visualize depth of field. I think this is important to find the balance between what's possible and what's appropriate in terms of chosen aesthetic.

«The princess and the frog» - John Musker - «we prefered use the illusion we get of 3d space using 2d tricks. The link between the designer and his drawing is quite special. The designer takes specific decisions, each line is a choice that belongs to him.» Setting the scene - Fraser Maclean.

I think there is random in photography that isn't in the drawing which is a quality in a way.

But the photographer does not have the freedom of the designer, he reproduces the world as it is. While the designer has the ability to change it, to invent it, to circumvent the rules. It brings something to me more than photography in a way that drawing is unique. You have the possibility to translate how you perceive the world

and this perception is entirely subjective. Of course, everything is always inspired by real life but it is how you translate it that makes the difference.

Traditional animation is the logical continuation of drawing. It requires an accurate analysis of the movement that makes it unique. The movement of the characters will always have more presence and personality if it's hand made. *«If we succeed in making the audience feeling what the character is feeling, the audience will now care about what happens to him, and that is audience involvement.» Illusion of life*- Frank Thomas & Ollie Johnston
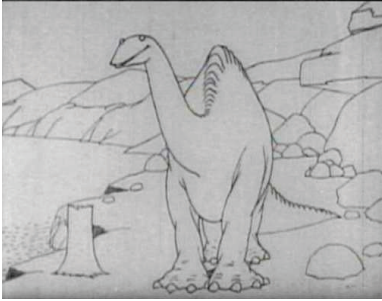
Cartoonist Winsor Mc Cay is the first to recognize animation as an art form. His best remembered film is Gertie the Dinosaur, done in 1914.

From Winsor Mc Cay to Walt Disney, Tex Avery, UPA animation, Paul Grimault, Gerald Scarfe, Ralph Bakshi, René Borg, Sylvain Chaumet and many others. Traditional animation has known a huge evolution in terms of design but also in terms of techniques. The technique used is always choosen in response to the content.

This is why, the period between the writing of the scenario and the choice of the technique is an important and long step.

Gerald Scarfe (The wall- Pink Floyd) is a caricaturist, Illustrator and designer. His work is a great example to show the relationship between the form and the content. p28-29-30 (fundamentals of animation)

He mentionned the tradition of animation from East of Europe which is totally different from the others in terms of aesthetic and technique.

2- CONTENT

Narrative is a way to attract the viewer's attention throughout the movie. This is a way to convey my ideas. A brothel is a surreal and unusual place. I guess this is out of curiosity. This is a place I can totally imagine visually (colors, backgrounds, atmospheres). In addition to it, this is an intimate place where men's behaviours change, they show an other side of their personnalities. I thought it could be a way to enjoy and developp my graphic style as much as I wanted. In the end, this is the real «why. My goal is to developp my imagination while I expand my technique.

There is a long french fine art tradition of depicting brothels. Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, Edgar Degas, Alphonse Mucha are ones of those several artists that participated in the representation of woman and brothels. There are elements in those paintings that really affect me in terms of gesture and atmosphere and I believe that an animation approach of these kinds of behaviors could be an interesting point. I'm also inspired by different photographs such as Eugène Atget and William Klein that depicted Paris and its citizens during the beginning of the XIXth century. *There were different levels of brothels in the XIXe century and some of them reflected in their own ways the bourgeois intimacy.* (Alain Cobin) I had to choose in terms of visuals how I wanted to depict the brothel. The women would be at their advantages here, since they finally wouldn't have sex with their guests, they would attract and provoque them as prey to achieve their goals.

Different painters from the same period also come to my mind, Gustave Adolph Mossa, Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt. Mossa spent fifteen years of his life caricaturing madness through symbolic references and each of his painting is an inspiration to me.

On the other hand, I have also modern inspirations that are a bit more trash but could also work. Tomi Ungerer, Ralph Bakshi depicted naked women through interesting ways. They are focused on representing the trash side of sex and prostitutes. I don't want this subject to be taken seriously, that's why I was hesitating in terms of period, aesthetics and atmosphere. I think this is more interesting for me to work on the exaggerated and trash part of it.
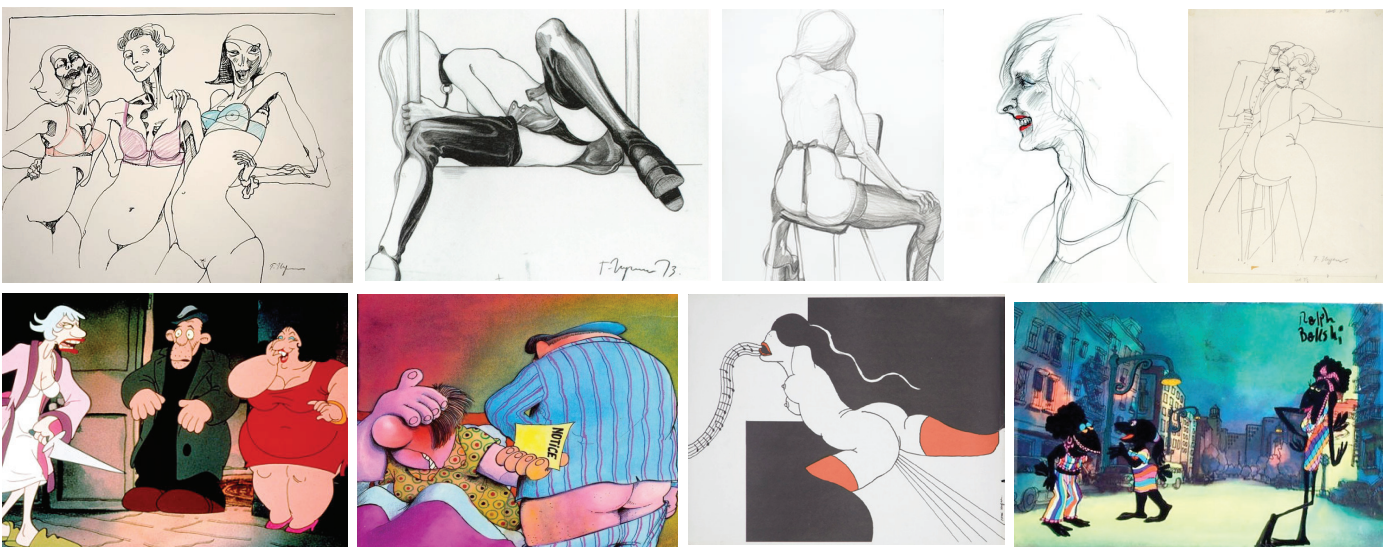
The idea of «lamb to the Slaughter» (Roald Dahl) affected me by its absurdity, its efficacity and its bold. This is the most effective way to conceal evidences. Moreover, this is a kind of «civilized murder» which fits completely with the characters and the atmosphere I want to give.

Of course, the meal could clearly refer to «The last supper». By definition, it is the last meal before death. It is a heavy meal where the condamned man is fully surrounded. I'm thinking of using the painting as a composition for one of the last scenes.

Here, I'm also thinking of a more common approach such as force feed the geese before eating them. This last meal can have several interpretations. When the meal starts, I'd like to point this moment as a crucial part. That's why I'm thinking of changing something about the technique. The guest would become at the edge of an animal in terms of character animation.

It's significant to talk about Jean de La Fontaine and GrandVille's that used animals to portray persons so as to reveal more clearly an aspect of his character. The use of animals to depict humans is a very old tradition that went through paintings, writing, toys, graphism. John Berger's essay about the use of animals in satirical art is very interesting to understand that. He explains why animals have always reflected humans behaviors.

The relations and differences between animals and humans, the attraction of children towards animals, the symbolic interpretations of them are some of the reasons.

Here, the prostitutes are at the edge of an animal behaviour which is ready to eat its prey.

I guess there is also a comparison to make between sex & food. The human needs for food and sex are part of the foundation of our nature, which makes it sensible that they are closely knit together.

My references are becoming clearer in terms of location. A brothel can't be anywhere, it needs a certain atmosphere that makes the viewer identify the general mood of the movie. Here, I think I need a very cold outside atmosphere to intensify the cosiness of the inside. I guess the town doesn't need to be recognized, but it needs to have specific details. Here I'd like to use a combination of Amsterdam, Brussel, Paris and Moscow as inspirations.

I recently discovered Willem Koekkoek who depicted Amsterdam from all angles, I have also found a large collection of old photographies of Amsterdam in the XIXth century.

3- CHARM OF FLATNESS

As strange as it may seem, this drawing from David Hockney triggered something inside me. I discovered it in 2007. I wanted to work on landscapes and I analyzed this painting for a while before realizing how much drawing opened endless possibilities. I realized how the perception of things was personnal for everyone.

Eyvind Earl - He made the backgrounds for «Sleeping Beauty». Walt Disney's animators disliked his art direction and openly protested it because he was changing the rules. He mixed atmospheric perspective with natural flatness of drawing. He brought something new in the Walt disney's style in terms of aesthetic. According to me, the precision of shadows and the perfection of lines makes it modern, he took a great iniative with colours, geometrical forms that made it innovative. Nowadays, a lot of animators try to imitate his style with computer effects. However, he'll stay a great reference for me in terms of risk-taking.

Backgrounds isn't only about representing exactly what it is, this is a translation of an atmosphere that will put the viewer into the movie. This can be done with different mixtures. From colors to shapes, to lines, to angles, to composition... etc
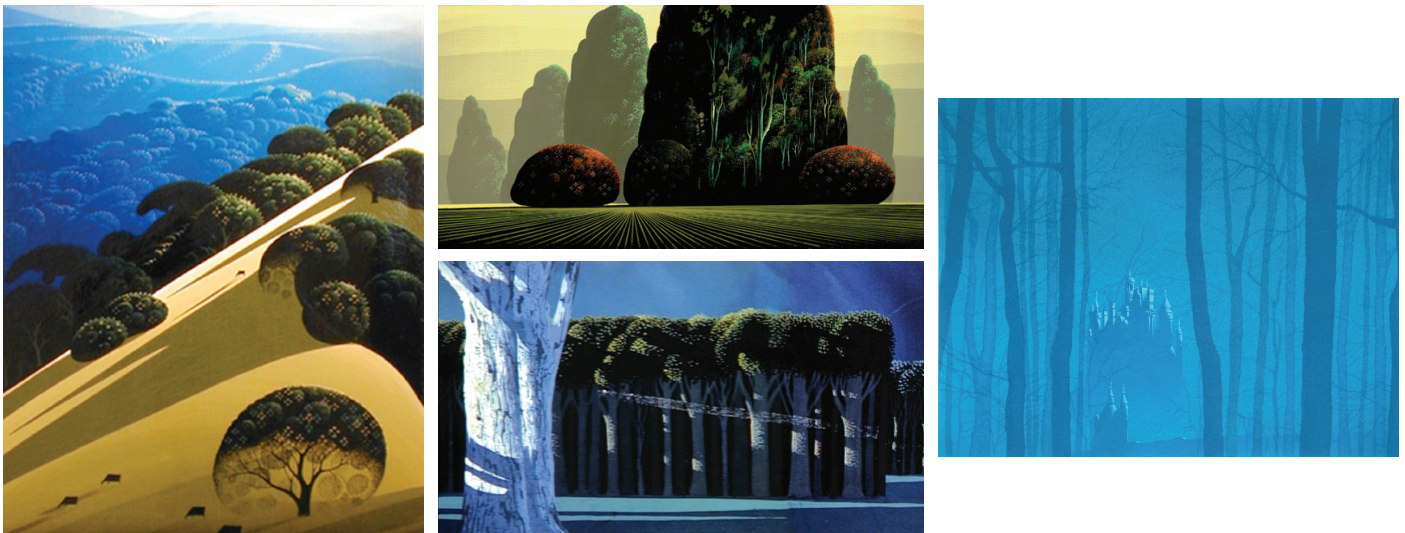
In art school, I learnt different techniques to depict something effectively. Drawing from memory is a good exercice, it requires a complete observation from the drawer to translate a general atmsophere effectively and it allows not to dwell into details.

Flatness is something very strong to get straight to the point. I think that once, you have enough technique, flatness is much more charming, it adds magic to a movie and in the same time, make the viewer believe in a story.
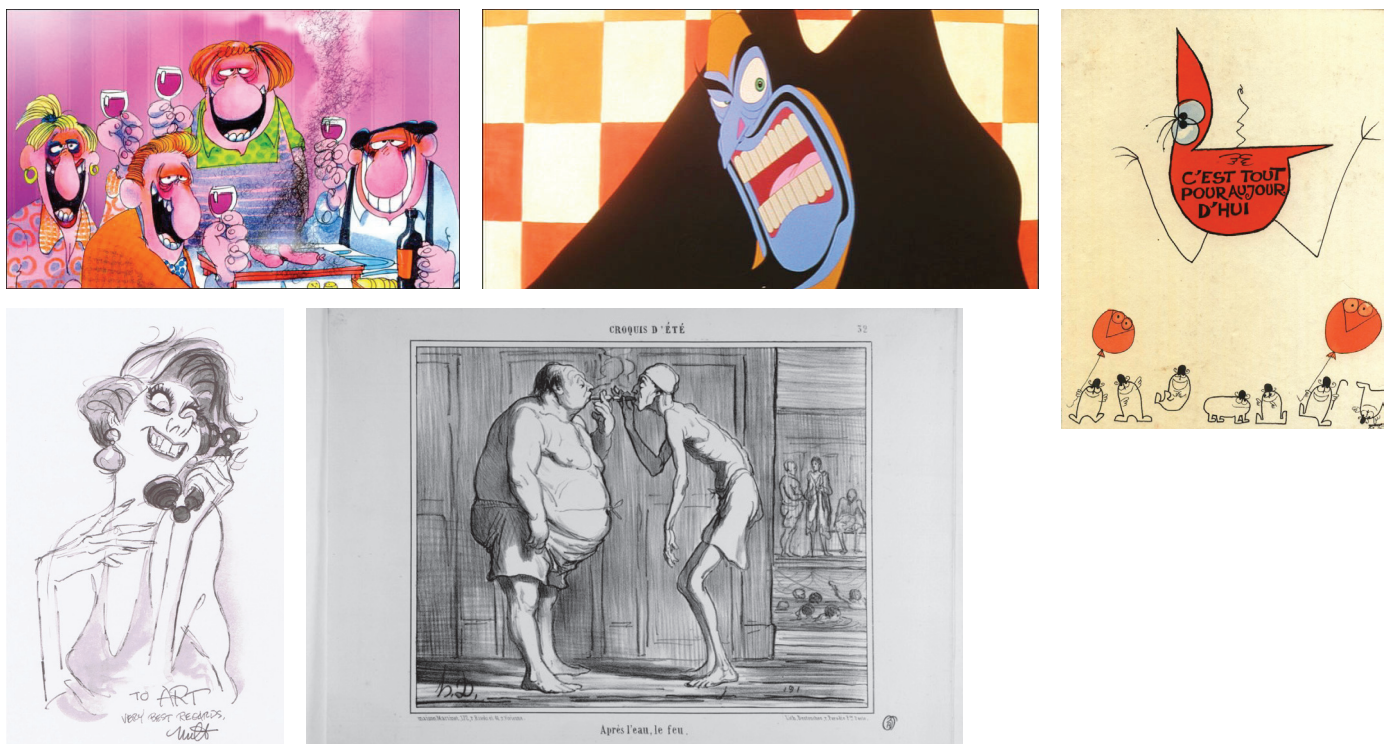
From left to right:

Christian Binet- Richard WIlliams - René Borg - Milt Khal «medusa» - Daumier - In terms of character design, I think those five drawers mostly represents my references.

From the line to the general atmosphere, this is exactly what I admire in drawing. I guess, the main common point between those drawers is their capacity in expressing a gesture with such few and simple lines.

According to me, drawing culminated when the designer is able to translate a behavior with the least possible treatment. I'm not saying that I denigrate very detailed drawings, on the contrary, I think that when a drawer is able to reach such a quality, he is able to draw mostly everything more confidently.

To talk about the very accurate part of those drawings, it seems to me that each of those drawing has a certain energy in terms of lines. I'm pretty sure that each of them has been done rather quickly. In each of them, without hearing any sound, reading any dialogues, it's pretty easy to guess the general nature of the characters. The exaggerated shapes of those characters are very interesting.

WHAT/HOW?

The final object will be an animation with a scenario upstream. It should last four minutes.

The soundtrack will have an important role here, so I plan to make it with François and a friend of mine which is sound designer. I consider having a voice over, and a sound design. The audience might be large. It will probably aim children but also adults interested in graphic design and illustration.

The story: In a faraway town where reigns hunger and poverty, a brothel organises nightly feasts. They eat their guests instead of having sex with them.

The story will be divided in two parts. I plan to have a one minute introduction. It will be mostly abstract and will explain the situation of the town in a very simple way. The second one will be the main part. It will be the story itself with more detailled drawings and backgrounds and an accurate animation.

This project will gather different areas :

Graphic design (composition, colors, typography) and animation. And of course, it implies drawing.

I will have a poster and research drawings in addition to the movie.

Once again, drawing occupies the most important part of this project.

What I expect here is to improve my personal connexion with traditionnal drawing. My grand father was a drawer, my mother is a drawer and a graphic designer so I'm kind of immersed into drawing since my childhood.

I officially started to learn drawing five years ago at Penninghen, an academic school of drawing and graphic design in Paris where I had my BA in graphic design. The first year was focused on the respect of proportions and reality. My teacher has always told me that once I'll be able to depict reality, I'll be able to invent my own rules. At that moment, I started to really admire the practice of drawing, I started to be absorbed.

My concern about drawing is very important and I want to apply it to animation.

The fluidity of a cartoon and the controlled movements of the characters is something new. My previous animations were digital and this is something I want to change here. I'd like to have a smooth, understable and charming movement. It implies traditionnal drawing as a first step and the use of the computer as a second and final step.

This project represents different steps in terms of production.

Script + Scenario

Atmosphere researchs, backgrounds researchs, character design researchs.

Drawing observation, analysis of gestures.

Story board

Animatic which means a story board with rough animations and sound to set up the rythm.
This implies drawing in parallel because the backgrounds and character design researchs never really stop before starting the real production. It also implies animation test.
Concerning the main sequence of my movie (which is the meal). I created a small maquette to visualise the space.
After all this preparation, this is the production part with the real backgrounds, the reals scenes and sequences, the colors, compositions, changes, sound design...

To be continued ....

THESIS

In terms of aesthetic, my purpous is to present my thesis as a book/diary.
I think the strenght of my project is the relationship and the contrasts between the content and the techniques.
Firstly here, I stress the relationship between men and women. This relationship changed significantly.
I'm using traditionnal techniques as a platform to provide a new temporality to this idea and to escape from an existing context. My choice of representation is fairly accurate.
Animation is usually used to tell children's stories (Disney) and I believe that using it to deal with «adults subject» is a way to convey strong messages without «shocking».
This is an excuse to parody a finding of today's society.

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DIARY /MAKING OF

Decisions : - A french voice over / no dialogues / a humorous approach (Shadocks)
            - Rythm : a fast introduction of the characters / a description of the city

February : - Record of my own voice to set up the rythm
            - Backgrounds tests
            - story board last changes
            - report on the position of women in contemporary society
            - books : John Berger's essay about the use of animals in satirical art

1st March :   - Collecting character design references to resume my own characters.
            (cf : Richard Williams advices)

3rd of March : - Brussel, collecting pictures of buildings, atmospheres for the backgrounds.

6th of March : - Precision of the story board, add new scenes

8th of March : - Barend tutorial - rythm , character behaviours.
            - New record
            - New backgrounds sketches

9th of March : Books : «fundamentals of animation» , «Animator's survival kit»
            - New backgrounds sketches, new sounds
            - Precision of the characters behaviours, rythm
            - Tchaikovsky listenings in order to choose a style of music (fantasia)

11th of March : - animatic progression

- music composition for the walk cycle (with françois)
-»fundamentals of animation» (book)
«the wall» gerald scarfe - techniques and approah - p28-29-30
- timing last scenes , close ups, character expressions

12th of march: - meeting with Simon, Thomas, Luis & Sebastian > Reflexion about the causes & consequences of the story - few changes -
Cartoon Brew > readings about René Laloux - Walt Disney
Lenght of the movie : 4 mn 30 > ...

13th of March : - Tim Burton's interview about his exhibitions in Paris and his movies.
17th of March: - animatic > done
20th of march: - real character drawing > starts

BIBLIOGRAPHY+REFERENCES

Le K - Dino Buzzati - collection of short stories.

As a contemporary author, he combines fiction and humor with a lucid and precise observation of the world around us. He describes various scenes of everyday life and add a fantastic aspect to each of them.
Death, Illusion, Time are themes that are frequently used in his book.
It is essential to me in terms of writing approach and story telling.
He uses a very humoristic way to tell tragic stories so the reader doesn't expect it at all and each story becomes pleasantly surprising. I think this is a way to put an extra dimension to his novels and I'd like to use it as a part of my story too.
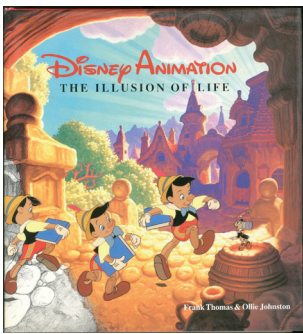
The illusion of life - Frank Thomas & Ollie Johnston.

This book is my constant guide. This is the most complete book on Disney films ever written.
The two writers, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston worked with Walt Disney himself, they personnaly animated leading characters in most of the famous films. The book answers questions about how the lifelike Effects of Disney character animation was achieved. This book concerns the practical aspect of my thesis, it allows me to understand many important things in character animation. It mixes both history and practice of animation so that in addition to the writings, there are many rare and wonderful visuals.
It is very accurate in terms of explanations. It starts with the first animations of Winsor Mc Cay *Gertie the Dinosaur* to *Pinocchio, Dumbo, Snow White, Peter Pan* and all the classical Disney films.

The animator's survival kit - Richard Williams

As its name states, it is necessary for a beginner in animation.
This is actually all the practical courses that I never had. From the walk cycle to the character faces movements.
It emphasizes the idea of timing and spacing which are the basis in terms of character gestures.
Richard Williams also learned from the best Disney animators and boiled it all down into a systematic working order. This book is full of formulas, principles, clichés and devices.

Has been seen:
«Delicatessen» Jean Pierre Jeunet 1991
«Un idiot à Paris» Bernard Blier 1967
«La jetée» Chris Marker 1963
«Apocalypse Hitler» Documentaire France 2 TV program
«Reservoir dogs» Tarantino 1992
«Inglorious basterds» Tarantino 2009
«Barry Lindon» Stanley Kubrick 1975
«Eyes wide shut» Stanley Kubrick 1998
«Les triplettes de Belleville» Sylvain Chomet 2002
«The flying house» Winsor Mc cay 1921
«Le voleur de paratonnere» Paul Grimault 1944
«L'araignéléphant» Piotr Kamler 1968
«Fantastic planet» Roland Topor 1973
«Le fabuleux destin d'amélie poulain» Jean Jeunet 2001
«Lamb to the slaughter» Alfred Hitchcock 1958
«La grande bouffe» Marco Ferreri 1973
«Edouard aux mains d'argent» Tim Burton
«Sleeppy Hollow» Tim Burton

Photographers
Willy Ronis - Eugène Atget - Henri Quartier Bresson - Doisneau - Irving Penn - Brassai - Zucca - Viollet

Architects
Adolf Loos - Peter Behrens - Otto Wagner - Joseph Hoffmann - Otto Schontal - Koloman Moser

Exhibitions
Yayoi Kusama - Danser sa vie - Diane Arbus - Musée d'Orsay (Art déco) - Pictoplasma (la gaîté lyrique) - Hey (la halle st Pierre)

Artists references
Ralph Bakchi (fritz the cat- American Pop)
Paul Grimmault (Le roi et l'oiseau)
Roland Topor (fantastic planet)
Olaf Gulbransson
Mossa
Alan Parker (The Wall)
Aubrey Beardsley
Daumier
Eyvind Earl
Heinz Edelmann
Jiri Trnka
Tim Burton
Matt Pyke

Books
«The Illusion Of Life» Frank Thomas ans Ollie Johnston
«Tout sur Kirikou» Michel Ocelot
«Setting the scene» Fraser Maclean
«Les fondamentaux de l'animation» Paul Wells
«Les filles de noce» Alain Cobin
«Le K» Dino Buzzati