

In conversation

Why did you start with Alice?

The idea of the Alice movie began the day I suddenly noticed an illustrated version of 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' on the shelves of the University's library.

The illustrated fairytale of Alice I owned as a child was always stuck in my mind, with the peculiar blue caterpillar smoking on the mushroom, and Alice's sister wearing a beautiful hat reading under a tree. Sad to say, I do not have this fairytale anymore, as I still keep favourite fairytales, dolls and toys from my childhood.

I searched the library and found myself the original Lewis Carroll text. The story was full of symbols, puns and hidden meanings, and one scene was following the other like a dream sequence. This guided me to the version of my Alice, which was coming instinctively.

I started making drawings for each chapter, and writing down any idea that came to my mind. Meanwhile, I was collecting the dialogues I liked from the story, in order to combine them later with images. At the same time I was producing various designs for the characters of the movie.

I ended up with lots of drawings, texts and ideas and I had to find a way to produce a movie of about 30 seconds. I photocopied and cut in small pieces everything that I had produced for each chapter, and started producing various storyboards by pasting the pieces on celluloid. I was controlling the whole thing by going through one storyboard at a time and examining whether I liked it or not.

I produced a final storyboard guideline and started producing the final drawings and animations. During that process I was still experimenting with the storyline until I was completely satisfied.

...and how do you see your version in relationship with all other previous versions of that famous book? How will you define the difference of your approach, where lies the accent in your Alice?

John Tenniel's illustrations in the first edition of Lewis Carroll's 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' have influenced many artists who have approached Alice. Many versions of Alice omit chapters and characters from the book or include elements from both books, 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' and 'Through the Looking-Glass'.

My movie is an adaptation of the first Lewis Carroll's book on Alice, 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'; it is visualized with Images-Symbols and Dialogues which have a main role in the movie and are kept exactly as they are written in the original book. I wanted to include all the chapters and characters from the book in a 32 seconds movie.

Some of the characters appear as symbols or through dialogues; the White Rabbit appears through a watch, Caterpillar through an animated smoking effect, Cheshire Cat through a smiling curve, and the gardeners, the soldiers, the courtiers and the royal children through playing cards signs.

Alice does not appear throughout the movie. She only appears as a point of view such as in chapter one falling down the rabbit hole and being in the hall, through symbols such as a tear, and through dialogues, with the exception of the end of the movie which finally appears drawn with white chalk on a blackboard, revealing that any text written on the blackboard is Alice's words. Text written in big size indicates that Alice is big, and text in small size that Alice is small; text written on white paper with black pencil represents the words of other participants in the movie - the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar, the Hatter, the Pigeon, the Spades, the Gryphon, the King and Queen of Hearts.

There are elements appearing through symbols, such as an orange dot for chapter's one ORANGE MARMALADE, wavy lines for chapter's two Pool of Tears, a spiral for chapter's three Caucus-Race, speed and mouse's tail/tale, a bee for chapter's five Alice's poem, an animated smoke effect for chapter's six Duchess's smoky kitchen, a white background becoming red for chapter's eight gardeners painting the white roses red.

For chapter one, the shrinking of the word 'DRINK ME' indicates the label on the bottle of the drink that makes Alice small, and the enlargement of the word 'EAT ME' indicates the words written on the cake which makes Alice big. For chapter five, the shrinking and enlargement of the mushroom indicates that one side of the mushroom will make Alice grow shorter and the other side will make Alice taller.

What is the message that you want to convey to the viewer? What do you want them to leave with? What idea or what feelings in mind?

The viewer can create his/her own story while watching the movie. An audience aware of the Fairy Tale is able to identify the chapters of the book while watching the movie.

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Images and text are interacting in the movie so as to produce various explanations, and the scenes are following each other just as happens in dreams: my Alice's dream.

I changed the order of some dialogues to create different meanings, and I didn't use the popular phrases of the book, as I wanted to produce a movie that would appear as a different story to each viewer, but that would also be identifiable by the audience aware of the fairytale.

*Do you see any connections between a traditional Children's poem and Alice?
What do you think is going to result from the showing together these two pieces?
What does tradition mean to you?*

They are both favorite stories from my childhood. Many traditional stories are violent and induce fear in their original forms; fairytales' characteristics include the use of fantasy, the confrontation of a problem and the successful resolution of that problem, and the use of a likeable hero.

In *Alice* I use symbols and text. In *Poem* I use objects I kept from my childhood as models for my movie: characters inspired from old illustrated fairytales, characters appearing through old toys such as a doll, a Lego house and a sewing machine. These are symbols for characters and some are appearing through the child's point of view; all characters are drawn with colour oil pastels on celluloid.

There is also a part of a second version of the *Poem* combined in my animation but in an indirect way, as I am playing with the effort of a child to say the poem correctly as a voice-over.

Both movies speak the language of the unconscious mind through the interpretation of a literary work into animated film.