

MUTANT GENE & GRIMM TALE REVIEWS, MENTIONS & STUFF

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GRIMM ROM REVIEWS

The GRIMM ROM is a collaboration of [Jeremy X. Halpern](#) and M.R. Petit.

COMPUTER LIFE

Grimm-ly Fiendish

Digital entertainment will look even more Grimm than usual when the much-awaited DVD (Digital versatile disc) from the independent artists company Mutant Weirdos, titled The Grimm Show, arrives within the next month or two. But, in this case, the Grimmer the better.

Based on the Brothers Grimm tale *The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was*, the disc contains a fantastical collection of animation, music, prerecorded video, text and live performances. Experienced in either the movielike self-running mode or in the navigable version, the story illustrates a strange young boy's macabre journey through his darkest fears. At press time, Weirdos expected to release an initial sample of the Grimm Show on a promotional CD in December and the full, multilingual version on DVD shortly thereafter. And after catching an early glimpse of The Grimm Show, BUZZ's fear that computerized amusements were beginning to benumb quickly subsided.

Lauren Gonzalez Fielder, December 1997

GRIMM TALE REVIEWS

The GRIMM TALE is by M.R. Petit with programming by [John Neilson](#)

HOTWIRED

The Jerk-Stop Aesthetic

Using the Web's limitations to create art for the times.

Turbulence artists end up taking full advantage of the limitations of the medium to create something that is of the Web, not merely on the Web. ... "You really can't have your druthers all the time," says Marianne Petit, co-creator of "The Grimm Tale." "[The Web's limitations] force you to make decisions, and sometimes the decisions are based on things you don't want to base them on ... but I think a lot of really good art comes out of having those restrictions."

"The Grimm Tale" profits from the restrictions. Based on perhaps the darkest of all the bleak fairy tales compiled by the Brothers Grimm, "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was," the story concerns the quest of an odd boy obsessed with his inability to shudder. He sleeps with dead men, uses skulls as bowling balls, commits dreadful violence left and right, all to no avail.

With a spooky MIDI soundtrack employed to great effect, GIF animations such as the animated cat-thumping scene flicker along the borders of the text with Web-powered resonance. Cartoonish, clumsy, and stark, the endless cycling picks up on the repetitive theme of brute horror and adds a ludicrous counterpoint to the underlying comedy of the shudder-free boy. A smooth slice of full-motion video would have been less successful, both in that instance as well as in the case of the recurring motif of disembodied heads

who roll their eyes, leer hither and thither, and twitch in depraved tics throughout the narrative. Petit and co-author John Nielson end up taking full advantage of the limitations of the medium to create something that is of the Web, not merely on the Web.

By doing so, they fulfill the mandate set forth by Turbulence's online curator (as well as featured artist) Helen Thorington, "to find out what the medium is and what the medium will bear." So maybe we don't need more bandwidth. Perhaps more luxurious conditions are merely an invitation to laziness. Keep the conditions harsh - and watch the great art emerge.

Andrew Leonard, October 8, 1996

<http://www.packet.com>

NEW YORK NEWSDAY

... Creating a virtual space is a challenge that many artists find exhilarating. For her latest work, Marianne Petit, 32, a multimedia artist and educator, created "A Grimm Tale," a retelling of a parable by the Brothers Grimm. "I didn't want it to be a minorly illustrated story ... I wanted it to actually be a piece in itself." Petit said. "It was more an interpretation as opposed to just a straight telling of the story with a couple of little drawings here and there."

For the piece, Petit created tennis ball-size puppet heads, then shot dozens of hours of videotape of the tiny likenesses. She teamed with John Nielson, 40, a programmer, and created sound files and GIF animations. The end result, is an eerie "total environment" for the user.

Jennifer Pirtle

PLUGGED IN. Sunday August 18, 1996

IGUIDE

Turbulence: New Works For the Web

If you want to see the still-constrictive boundaries of the Web pushed a little more, check out this sophisticated site, which features multimedia works of art that are heavy on sound, graphics, animation, viewer interactivity and just plain creative talent. The stories are complex (the appropriately titled "A Grimm Tale" has 14 chapters) and the artwork is superior. This site bodes well for the Net's creative future.

[IGUIDE](#)

MUTANT GENE REVIEWS

The Mutatest Show on Earth

New York based multi-media artist M.R. Petit describes her CD-ROM, The Mutant Gene & Tainted Kool-Aid Sideshow as "the psychodramatic confession of an extraterrestrial." Taken more literally, the disc is an unsettling journey filled with sinister toys, grotesque creatures in gargoyle-like masks and the fleeting of half-remembered dreams all set to a



creepy, just-off-the-midway soundtrack.

Petit is now using the Web to create her next project "I'm attracted to working on the Web because you can update things. A CD-ROM gets permanently pressed and you can't change anything." And for an artist, letting your creation mutate is half the fun.

Mary Elizabeth Williams
WIRED Magazine, May 1996
photo by Jill Greenberg

HOTWIRED

The Mutant Gene & Tainted Kool-Aid Sideshow was designed by M. R. Petit to be projected onto walls at SoHo loft parties. Like *ScruTiny*, it is unstructured: the journey begins with a ring of virtual tunnels to explore. Each path leads to an unmarked labyrinth of bleeding color, monstrous puppets, and looping Residents-like techno. Click spots either activate a simple animation or usher in a new representation of hedonism altogether. All meaning is relative; the point is to enjoy the atmosphere and sample the leering sensuality of this abstract hipster paradise.

Ian Christe, February 1996

FUTURE less FUTURE

Petit's imagery has a disturbing psychodramatic, stream of consciousness depth, as "The Grimm Tale (Or the Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was)" indicates. Petit, in fact, has acknowledged her interest in mental illness, more particularly, "the definitions, distinctions and grey areas of altered states, as well as the general fear that lies within our society of being perceived as 'crazy' or 'not normal'" -- even though there is something clearly crazy or not normal about our society. Indeed, the altered state of consciousness conventionally considered crazy is represented again and again in Petit's work, as "The Mutant Gene & Tainted Kool-Aid Sideshow" indicates ...

Petit uses the spectacle format -- **the** mode of presentation in our society, thanks to the media -- to creative advantage. But, instead of using it to immobilize us into benign passivity, as is usually the case, she uses it to activate our unconscious anxieties. One might say she is ecstatically anxious ...

Donald Kuspit
<http://www.flf.org/FLF>

WORLD ART MAGAZINE

The Mutant Gene & Tainted Kool Aid SideShow recreates a performance of the same name that she staged several times around the city in 1993. Through a mix of live action, video and synthesized sound, Petit evokes a world of misfits and psychological freaks ...

The Mutant Gene, like the original performance, contains no text and very little spoken language. Computer technology lets the viewer select the duration of each section and the sequence of events, a kind of control difficult to implement in a conventional theater space. But intimacy rather than interactivity is clearly the point here. The videos are mostly extreme close-ups of Petit performing in a variety of grotesque masks, often appearing distorted and slavered with garish colors. A little poking around turns up a couple of more conventional music videos and some sinuous graphics ... that alternately evoke oscilloscope patterns and iomorphic Abstraction.

Petit cleverly uses the weaknesses of CD-ROM technology - its poor resolution, slow response times, limited screen size - to evoke a dream-like, carnival atmosphere. The result is a modest, captivating mood piece, a desktop-size cousin to Brian Eno's ambient video installations.

Corey Powell, July 1996

OFFLINE

The Mutant Gene and Tainted Kool-Aid Sideshow. The brainstorm of web-magician and performance artist M. R. Petit, this CD-ROM is a must have! A thoroughly enjoyable ride through the world of abstraction. Originating in 1993 as multi-media circus-art extravaganza performed at various NYC venues, the 1995 CD-ROM incorporates live and animated images and text, and a barrage of interesting musical scapes. Following a multi-sensory introduction filled with wildly odd figures, the ROM then provides you with a living circular menu from which you choose your initial direction. Your aesthetic choice determines which color-rich psycho-odyssey you will embark on. And there are many!

It is easy to loose time in this cyber-situationist environment where stream of consciousness controls and captivates; where Dada is normative. Dreamtime is playtime here. Duration and direction are affected at will, images oscillate and meander within other changing images while patterns and sound react to mouse placement. Petit has pushed the envelope of web technology by making the process of experience both an act of deliberate experimentation and sheer creative fun.

It is noteworthy that the ideas and images in this ROM stem from a performance art piece, for it demonstrates not only how interrelated the various arts are, but also how successful techno-translations from non-cyber media can be when done with ingenuity and a love for the art. Doubtless, this ROM will be an inspiration to many performance artists whose audiences cannot possibly rival in numbers the distribution of a ROM or the intimacy of the experience.

I very much regret not ever having seen the multi-media performance that spawned this excellent ROM. I can't wait to experience Petit's next cyber-work! I would encourage you to pick this one up, and also to look into her other captivating techno-images.

Scott Noegel

<http://www.lightlink.com/offline>

UTNE READER

"What CD-ROMs do you use?"

"None. They're all awful and slow, except some that are in development by a colleague of mine named Joe Rosen, including one that's about the movie The Blob. I'm really hopeful about a new, independently produced CD-ROM called The Mutant Gene and Tainted Kool-Aid Side Show by M.R. Petit, a performance artist whose work I greatly admire ...

Interview with Stacy Horn,
Echo Communications Group, December 1995

Computer Graphics World

... the videos and images are beautiful

Cool Connections, April 1996
<http://www.cgw.com>

Complete Artistic and Professional Resume

GRIMM & MUTANT GENE EVENTS

- Experimental Media Arts, Australia (4/98)
- Computer Life Magazine (1/98)
- New York Digital Salon (11/97)
- LEONARDO (10/98)
- Mixed Messages: image, text & Technology festival, NC (10/97)
- 8th International Symposium of Electronic Arts/ISEA, Chicago (9/97)
- Siggraph 97 - The Electric Garden, Los Angeles CA (8/97) ¥ Void, NYC (7/97)
- Art in an Age of Possibilities, Ceres Gallery, NYC (6/97)
- Montreal International Festival of Cinema & New Media (6/97)
- Festival Internacional de la Imagen (Colombia, 4/97) ¥ Thaw 97 (5/97)
- [SHIFT Hotsite](#) (Japan, 3/97)
- [Offline](#) (2/97)
- USAToday Hotsite (2/97)
- BRAIN (Italy, 1/97)
- Women & Performance - A Journal of Feminist Theory: Sexuality and Cyberspace, Performing the Digital Body (Volume 9, No. 1, Issue 17)
- Espace CD-ROM, DrancyberCulture, FRANCE (11/96)
- New York Exposition of Short Film & Video & Interactive Media (11/96)
- Women & Performance, a journal of feminist theory: Sexuality and cyberspace (11/96)
- ISEA96 (Netherlands, 9/96)
- World Art (7/96)
- THE GRIMM TALE (Or the Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was) (7/96)
- REUTER News Service (5/96)
- WIRED Magazine (5/96)
- Parsons - New Media Seminar (4/96)

- Thaw '96: Festival of Film, Video and Digital Media, University of Ohio - First Prize (4/96)
- SoundLab, NYC (4/96)
- NYC ACM/Siggraph Media Integration Seminar (3/96)
- Macxhibition 1996 - On Screen Presentation, (3/96)
- PHOSPHOR - Electronic Gallery exhibited on Path Mass Transit System, NYC-NJ (3/96)
- Spontaneous Combustion Festival, NYC (3/96)
- FUTURElessFuture Group Web Exhibition essay by Donald Kuspit (3/96-present)
- Neo-Kinetics: PostModern Techne, 473 Gallery, 8th Fl. Project Space, NYC (3/96)
- Guest Lecturer - School of Visual Arts (2/96)
- HotWired (2/96)
- CD-ROM Today Sampler Disk (1/96)

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