Marianne R. Petit

Animation & Video   Community, Curatorial, Teaching   Dioramas & Installations
Miscellaneous   Paper Art & Pop-Ups   Web & Interactive

Grimm Projects

1995-1997
The Grimm Story started in approximately October 1995, when I found a fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm entitled "The Story of the Youth Who Went Forth to Learn What Fear Was."

In February of 1996 I received a grant from New American Performing Arts' Turbulence Project to develop the story as a website. I made a whole series of puppets out of sculpy representing all the characters, went up to the Experimental Television Center in Owego and shot hours and hours of videotape. I then joined efforts with programmer John Neilson to build the website. The project went online July 1996.

Disappointed that the video got reduced to teeny gif animations, I thought it would be nice to use fullmotion video again and collaborated with Jeremy X. Halpern to develop the story as a series of live performances (The Grimm Show) and as a prototype for a DVD-ROM. Puppets were made into masks, we wrote a whole new score, generated a lot of new video, and took it on the road.

The projects received a lot of nice attention at the time. You can read reviews below.

You can also see the original full 1997 documentation of the project (with lots of gif animations and cool little 160x120 quicktime movies), as well as links to the original Turbulence web commission.

The original site.

Review Excerpts:

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 hte 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 glimps of The Grimm Show, BUZZ's fear that computerized amusements were beginning to benumb quickly subsided.
Lauren Gonzalez Fielder, December 1997

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.

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