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Simone Massi – the artist behind the opening sequence of the 69. Mostra International Film Festival
The beautiful moving pictures that welcome the audience before every screening are created by the award winning Italian animation director Simone Massi. 'The Magic of Simone Massi' including all his short films was screened as a special event of the 69. Mostra International Film Festival.

For me as an animation film director myself, it's very pleasing to see that the festival decided to commission an artistic animation for the opening sequence and brand all its promotion materials with images from it.

KINEMATRIX How was the process of making the festival trailer, did it feel like a commissioned job or were you free to make whatever you felt is right?

SIMONE MASSI I had a free hand. It has been just drawn to my attention that the opening sequence has to be not only a short film by Simone Massi but also an homage to Films. At the beginning I was a bit worried and nervous because I was thinking about the importance of the Venice Film Festival, the reaction of people etc, but once I started to animate all the thoughts were swept away: I did my best, I did what I could.

The reception of the opening sequence has been great, the festival audience simply loves it!
The strength of the images and the fluent transformation take us from one visual metaphor to the other, always leaving something to be discovered the next time. The most exposed image is the opening one with the giant rhinoceros in the boat. Massi's rhinoceros appears everywhere among the Golden Lions of the 69. Mostra International Film Festival. This beautiful and at the same time absurd image could be seen as a tribute to the greatest Italian master of cinema Federico Fellini and his film E LA NAVE VA (translated in English 'And the Ship Sails On')

Is there any hidden meaning in the gigantic rhinoceros? What does it symbolize for you?

I like animals and I am touched by those that are victims of the human wickedness. Rhinoceros is ancient, strong, short-sighted, irascible and surreal; it has a bird who lives on his back and for this reason it's in my heart, and for the same reason it's becoming extinct. I had only 30 seconds to tell a story so I decided to begin with the most absurd scene - a gigantic rhinoceros on the boat with a small child.

The colourful images of the animated sequence are something new for Massi. His previous films are predominantly graphic, black & white with very little colour accents.

Your work is predominantly black and white. In the last films gradually there are colour accents appearing - red scarf, orange fruit, to full culmination of colours in the Venice Film Festival opening sequence? Is this some sort of natural transition and do you intend to use more colour in your future projects?

The opening sequence is an animation of mine that has an homage to the films I love; to separate the different parts I decided to use colour and black and white. I like the result but I don't think it's my way: my universe is in black and white with a little red stain.

For years Simone Massi closely collaborates with the animation director Julia Gromskaya. Her latest animation film, which is in the festival circuit at the moment is entitled 'Fiumana'. Her films resemble impressionistic paintings and are full of colour.

On almost all your films you work in close collaboration with Julia Gromskaya. How does that effects the individual way of working for both of you? Do you influence and inspire each other?

Julia and I come from different lands and cultures, we definitely have a very different styles. It could be that sometimes we influence and inspire each other, but if so it happens naturally and subconsciously. Frankly, we don't pay too much attention to that aspect, there is always something and someone that influences our works and lives.

All of Massi's films feel so personal and intimate. Usually short animation films are seen by very limited audiences, mainly at animation film festivals. I was wondering how Simone Massi feels about the idea of working with extended crew on longer animation film projects.

Within your films I noticed that some are made as co-productions, some are just produced by yourself. I can imagine that co-productions are with bigger budgets, but also involve more people in

the process. Your way of working seems very intimate and I was wondering which way you prefer to work on your films, smaller or bigger productions?

I made 20 animation and 19 are produced by me. I don't mind about the size of the production company, I would like to work with a fair wage (that for me means a worker salary) but furthermore I would like to be respected as a person and as an artist. Because money is less important than freedom and dignity.

What is your opinion of artistic feature animated films, a lot have been created the last decade in Europe? Could you imagine yourself directing one?

Sure, I would like to direct a feature. Some sequences are already in my mind and a producer is interested in my project. But to make a feature film, it's necessary to have time, money and to work with a team and this is something new for me, maybe it won't be that easy. Also because of my character: I am like a rhinoceros, I get along better with a little bird than people.

The magic of Massi's opening sequence, accompanied by the beautiful music score, haunts the audience during the 10 days of the Venice Film Festival, every time they see it. Big 'thank you' to the artist for his wonderful contribution!

More of Simone Massi imaginative universe can be seen at: www.simonemassi.it

http://www.kinematrix.net/venezia2012/KMX_biennalecinema2012-interviste.htm