

## Thesis propositions

for the dissertation entitled *Aniráma*

The writer of Doctorate theses is in a strange situation when her subject is the category of such an artistic form she herself is part of. When I chose contemporary Hungarian animation art as my field of research, I did it out of a very selfish consideration: to get this genre more attention and interest, as being a designer of visual communication I had to face the lack of information and misconceptions concerning the art of animation on a daily basis. I intentionally use the term given in my degree to name the varied activity we, designers try to make apprehendable for ‘civilians’ through our “products” working as graphic artists, directors or art directors – in most instances producing further misconceptions. It is the consequence of the experiences I gained in these different fields that I dropped anchor in the sub-field of visual communication that despite its impressive past is looked upon – even by numerous experts working with art – as a rather un-serious genre. Even well-meaning analysts mostly avoid the swampy field of animated motion picture, as discussing “feature films” or the phenomena of contemporary fine arts may seem a lot more “valuable”, or at least more substantial than talking about mice and cats running about, or perhaps about a rabbits with chequered ears ...

Without disputing the invaluable significance and role of the different line- and plasticine animals in the development of the genre, I, myself was once more interested in works of animation art that broadened the limits of the genre by breaking conventions. However, the more I got to know about the non-conformist opuses, the more I realized that it is desirable to get acquainted with what we wish to negate, in order to be able to negate it. Especially when during this period of getting acquainted with all the bordering art forms that inspired, influenced, enriched or lived in symbioses with our particular-natured genre unfold ...

Thus, after some years passed, and I had already made a number of individual films and had also gained some knowledge on the ‘applied’ designing side as well, I got it into my head that I’ll try to mediate all I consider important relating about this branch of the art of motion picture in my own way, utilizing the special perspective practical work gave me.

First and foremost, to say that it exists. After that, that we have masters who represent this genre emblematically. And I also want to say what they think about what they do. And what’s more, what they think about what others are doing. But what the representatives of the bordering art forms think about us and our works of art has also become interesting. And as the present unfolded, frame by frame, the past became more and more characteristic, and the hazy pictures of the future appeared ...

My original aim, to build and fill the virtual ‘museum’ of contemporary and Hungarian animation art has expanded with the demand that I do it from the aspect of the international history and significance of animation. Furthermore, if possible, to try and help my future visitors, readers wander in my virtual pantheon in relation to the general phenomena of 20<sup>th</sup> century and contemporary art forms.

And as I myself am a filmmaker, the medium of film, a special documentary film seemed as the most authentic medium. The result of my first attempt is the portrait series *Animare necesse est...* which was complemented by a book of the same title, a book I have used in my teaching practice ever since. As far as my doctorate studies were concerned I could have sat back as ‘The Masterwork’ based on my research was completed, but it was precisely this undertaking that made me realize that this case cannot be considered closed in the least, it is not even opened. By now, all I had managed to do seemed like a drop in the ocean... Thus I soon applied for another

grant for the making of another documentary film. In the preproduction phase I was lucky to make the interviews, the relative excerpts of which are included in the dissertation material I submitted. And for the making of the film I continue to apply for grants again and again and again – a method all filmmakers know well.

As this procedure is slow, and its outcome uncertain, this material will sooner take the form of a book than that of a film. That is to say, the movie that will once be finished will be a different movie from the one I had in mind, as times change and we change within it ... This is precisely the reason why the most gripping parts of the dissertation are the statements and views concerning timely phenomena of the genre. The events of the past years and months in animation have luckily been so dynamic and interesting that the enthusiastic researcher would constantly try to add more information to his/her collection until the dissertation would swell to the width of a codex and s/he would pass all deadlines for good!

Maybe it is not befitting to talk of personal motivation on the occasion of the writing of an abstract entitled “Thesis propositions”, but nevertheless, it is unavoidable, as my very strong creative ties to the genre of animation is the core of my commitment as a researcher and analyst. It is my conviction that us who pursue this genre, sense different focal points, see different problems and assess phenomena and oeuvres or changes in technology differently than experts of theory. Therefore we are often more indulging or sometimes stricter. We pose different questions and we may give strange answers ... Many of us compose texts with a little more difficulty and maybe the text is less refined than those written by our aesthetician or film historian colleagues; maybe our definitions are inaccurate, or seem inaccurate, and we are no doubt more passionate and biased than we perhaps should be. I obviously have an axe to grind while writing these lines: it may seem I’m just trying to explain myself, why I’m not sticking with my own trade – that is, why don’t I just make movies or paint, draw and that’s it, why don’t I leave the genre’s history and all that to the experts? Well, my reasons are stated above. Essentially I have to say the genre’s history is yet to be written, relevant reviews are rare as a blue diamond, and the same misconceptions circulate about animation as ten or twenty years ago, even though the genre has never before integrated so intensively into the visual phenomena of our daily lives.

Thus I completed my dissertation – out of practical consideration – with the aim of later being able to hand it to my students, just like I did my first paper (intended as my final dissertation) entitled *Animare...* What’s more, I would like this book to become an informative read for all ‘civilians’ interested in the history of animated motion picture. I say the history of motion picture and not the history of film, as animation has numerous references to designing, the fine arts, as well as to music and the history of feature films. Animated film is only the subcategory of the genre, even if it’s the top category and maybe the most important of all other possibilities.

As a consequence of the above, my writing is not a list of pronouncing and maxims, but a continuously expanding system open to new questions: it is a “conversing book” about art growing closer to a living encyclopaedia from the former intention of creating a ‘museum’, on the pretext of a loving, but complete vivisection of the art of animated motion picture.

Éva M Tóth