

# **BA (HONS) FINE ART: THEORY OF ART THESIS**

## **Pure beauty and its role in Art Animation**

**Mizuki Watanabe – New Media**

**March 2005**

In this essay, the nature of beauty will be examined through several discussions about the following.

- Introduction
- Art animation
  - Yuri Norstein's "*Hedgehog in the Fog*"
  - Works of Jan Svankmajer
  - Origin of Art as "Beauty" and Liberation from it
- Influence of Infancy in Art
  - Fairy tale
  - Edited Memory in Art
  - Expression of thoughts or intuitions
- Conclusion

## **Introduction**

For thousand of years, people have been talking of beauty. What is beauty? What is it for? What does beauty do to us? Naturally, a number of thinkers established their answers to the above questions, and many of these thinkers are seen as important and influencing our current sense of value for beauty. Perception of beauty is different depending on individuality. Even though it is not same, there is a standard perception of beauty. The simple description about this standard beauty is provably perfection, symmetry and giving pleasure. And the sense of feeling the standard beauty is developed in the childhood along with the study of morality. Beauty by common sense is just being acceptable as it is, however it is not so simple by individual sense. This essay attempts to explore the sense of beauty through, amongst others, Yuri Norstein's animation and use of infancy in art.

This essay is presented in the following structure. The first part of the essay compares and contrasts Norstein's and other artists' works. It begins, with some of the key features of the paradigm. It is followed by the discussion of the similarities and differences in viewpoints between Norstein and others. The second part of article focuses on the implication of the paradigms, discussed in the first part on the use of influence from childhood in art. Finally, conclusion is given.

### **Variety of beauty kind**

Pure beauty is easily accepted by human instinct and radical ethics. There is a common way to view any kind of matters, and beauty from a preconceived viewpoint is on the harmony of the well-balanced reason. For example, flowers are beautiful as they are. There is no question and it is quite understandable. On account of its simplicity, standard beauty is thought as not so meaningful on occasion. Therefore a lot of artists tried several expressions to make aesthetic beauty with complication, and complication of aesthetic beauty is often made by logical or eccentric expression. But, is aesthetic beauty opposed to standard beauty? This question will be explored by examples of art animation.

## Art animation

Some animated films can be huge box-office successes, while others are still being seen as cutting-edge experimentation and/or underground “cult” subversion.

In the art animation scene, many artists experiment to create original beauty. Animation is normally for children, on the other hand there are some interesting animations for adult people. To impress mature people, their beauty expresses deep meaning, and as a result, some of their beauty does not become appreciated widely. Art animation, which is strange for some people, has an eccentric image, and its eccentricity often implies the dark side of imagination. This kind of peculiarity appears in the works of Jan Svankmajer, Brothers Quay and some others.

Aesthetic beauty is shown metaphorically in art animation. Eccentric animations, like Svankmajer’s work, are interesting because of his peculiar approach. Their dark imagination is seen as a kind of taboo. Seeing taboo stimulates curiosity to overcome fear. However dark imagination is not always necessary for artistic expression. Superb animation is meaningful even if its feature is not so eccentric. For this concern, discussion will be continued with an analysis of Yuri Norstein’s work, “*Hedgehog in the Fog*”. His work is not only for mature people. As mentioned above, art animation has often been difficult to be appreciated by children. Therefore analysis will be done to discover how Norstein made aesthetic beauty without logic or eccentricity.

### Yuri Norstein’s “Hedgehog in the Fog”

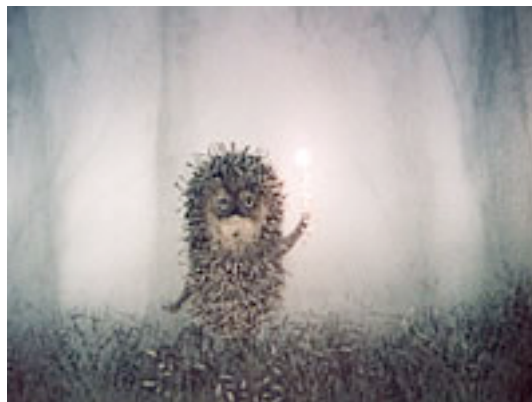


Fig.1

Yuri Norstein is one of the most celebrated art animation artists. Of his few works “*Hedgehog in the Fog*”(1975) is arguably his most beautiful film. (Fig.1)

This short animation (approx10mins) tells the story about the little wonder of an inquisitive hedgehog in mysterious woods. The timid hedgehog starts his journey to visit his friend, bear

cub, to count stars together. During this journey, he meets some mystifying inhabitants who sometimes do mischief or help him. There are numbers of characters veiled by both the fog and Norstein's narrative. His direction hides clear details of what is happening in the spectacle of the woods, and it reveals tiny parts of wonder to stimulate the viewer's imagination. In the end, the hedgehog is in deep thought about his journey of passing through the woods, especially about the mysterious and beautiful element of the woods. The viewer is able to join his deep thought by Norstein's arrangement. All elements in this short animation are universal beauty of innocence; they are neither psychoanalytic trigger nor conceptual trigger, despite its great ability to provoke the viewer's imagination to be synchronized with the protagonist. Therefore, this animation becomes impressive for both adult people and children. Norstein won numerous awards and has been one of the most influential animation artists. His sense of beauty approaches universal sense of human instinct, and also it is appreciated from the specialist's aesthetic point of view. Norstein expresses quite warm and ever lasting naiveté. With regard to the technical point, he uses primitive means, which appear as familiar handmade features. The technique of Norstein's work is not amazing and sensational in a high-tech way. Although it is not possible to discover how it is made at first glance. Norstein's work relates to artisans rather than ordinary animation technicians. Probably it is because he sticks to the possibility of human physical ability, and his handiwork still looks amazing due to sensitive design. Therefore, Norstein's quiet passion creates impressive beauty in just a 10 minute long animation.

The narrative of Norstein's films is mostly based on Russian folktale but the script of "*Hedgehog in the Fog*" is actually written by Yuri Norstein and scriptwriter of his studio in this case. His narrative is far from the typical story of children's cartoons. He does not intend to write unrealistic happenings to emphasize making the audiences excited, and does not make "the adventure of hedgehog" dramatic. In his film, there are some hints to find the importance and meaning of ordinary everyday life. He is suggesting that people do not have to be driven to excessive sensations to be pleased. There is something that triggers adrenalin in everyday life, however people often forget to value everyday life experience. Norstein's work claims life is much more beautiful than people expect. In "*Hedgehog in the Fog*", the duration of the hedgehog's journey is not so long, perhaps it is about less than one hour, and it is just a story about one day of the hedgehog's life in the woods. If one were to venture to say a happening, it would be an accident when the hedgehog fell into a stream, however this happening is also described as not so dramatic. The hedgehog might be falling into the stream regularly.

The world of "*Hedgehog in the Fog*" is a sort of utopia. There is no one who is described as

perfect or being of towering stature, and it is not a controlled place by domination. Everyone is equal, and no one is trying to be superior to others or trying to display their specialties. Norstein's work itself is also not trying to show off innovative specialty; nevertheless, it addresses the artist's significance firmly. The innocence of the hedgehog represents the pure beauty of his work, and it tells us that not only complication of thought creates depth of meaning.

In the real world, there are some people who are satisfied with a feeling of superiority. Actually for balancing the world, it is important to try to be better for the feeling of superiority. It makes people endeavor for progression. Competition and ambitious attitude is essential to forward movement. This fact of reality would be the reason to bring the necessity of utopian imagination to escape for relaxation. Utopia exists for peace of mind. As far as animation-in-general functions, Norstein shows state, which suggests possibility of animation to be on a level with other media. His expression reaches to more than just animation, it manages a great value of poetic narrative and visual quality. Distinction of media is not a point of his work.

Norstein has succeeded in constructing suggestive expression with pure beauty. It consists of innocent elements and it is not complicated though it is deep. This point is quite remarkable. Because meaningful work often gets into intricate layer as it is deepened. The inner mind, which produces imagination, has many parts and some of them belong to the dark side, and this side is seen into the animation of Jan Svankmajer.

### **Works of Jan Svankmajer**



*Fig.2*

Jan Svankmajer is perhaps best known as an art animator of stop motion films and definitely one of the pioneers of this field. He has been making use of his own country's tradition, marionettes, into his extra original animations. Czech animation films are quite specific and their style is very different as it is identifiable from others.

Svankmajer is constantly making animated films, primary short films, for last few decades. He combines experimental practices of various animated objects with live-shot filming to create peculiarity, which consists of an uncanny and black humorous world. His expression is referenced from the gothic and the grotesque of folk tales. (Hames, 1995) For him, folk tales are not a fantasy of pureness or a mellow dreamy story of utopia. His view focuses on the cruelty of archaic tradition, and he developed it into dark imagination of eccentric intimation.

On account of his roots, Jan Svankmajer has made some films adapted to folktale and fairytale, like Norstein has done, however their animations have completely different taste. His strongest influence is from Lewis Carroll, and he directed “*Alice*” (Fig.2) in 1987, which is based on “*Alice in Wonderland*” written by Lewis Carroll. “*Alice*” is a marvelous uncanny version of an original story. In Svankmajer’s version, a real girl or antique doll acts as Alice. It is combined with stop motion animating and live shot filming, although it is not entirely smooth motion. Artificial motion is more effective to express an absurd world. Unlike the Disney version, there are not lovable or adorable characters in his film, all of the characters are imperfect and almost scary. There is a juxtaposition of strange objects belonging to the surreal with ordinary everyday objects. This is definitely not for small children. It is too scary and dark.

As a pioneer, Svankmajer’s works are celebrated for their invention, as well as its total weirdness. The most consistent element of his films is a dark, cynical outlook, and Svankmajer's surrealist connection is well known. His surrealism, although a discursive idiom even in its more esoteric Czech variant, inherits much from romanticism and the grotesque. What Svankmajer’s film makes attractive is an abnormal beauty upon this grotesque eccentricity. His world makes audiences feel an unusual atmosphere, as if they are seeing a hidden place, just like underneath or behind the real world. This peculiarity provokes a virtual experience to see the forbidden world secretly. Therefore romanticism is arranged upon abnormality.

In “*Alice*”, all characters are unbalanced and they are imperfect. Their fragility is a sort of beauty though. It is against the standard way of feeling beauty, and consists of some elements like gloominess, decadence and so forth. For Jan Svankmajer, Lewis Carroll is an inadvertent pioneer of surrealism. (Hiruma, 2002) His attention went to towards the distortion of Carroll’s world. Despite “*Alice in Wonderland*” being widely read as a lovable fantasy fairytale for children, its author Lewis Carroll was not really a normal person. Carroll’s odd interest for little girls has not been kept as a secret nowadays. He frequently had them over for tea, more than he had adults over, and enjoyed photographing them. He had an odd, and of course frustrated, love for little girls. And, Carroll became particularly fond of one eleven years old girl, called Alice,

the daughter of the dean of Oxford. (Cohen, 1995) He wrote the Alice stories for her, hence the name of the main character in his tale. For Carroll, little girls were on an equal footing with him, he didn't have a view as a guardian. This fact is quite unusual. If he lived today, he would be arrested. Longing for innocence drove him to behave strangely. However, most of "*Alice in wonderland*", as fairytale or films, has been created with ignorance of his distorted part in Carroll's "wonderland", because, they are created from the viewpoint of guardian to be appreciated by children and their parents. On the contrary, Svankmajer's "*Alice*" was not made for children. He saw Carroll's world straightforwardly and created "wonderland" in Svankmajer's original way. Svankmajer took Carroll's fantasy as surrealistic imagination, and linked with obsessional expression of animated objects. His description almost fetishises on objects. Svankmajer's description of objects is quite elaborated with the sound, which is closely recorded. Through detailed objects, the images are more eloquent than words, and materials are more substantial than any vocabulary in his film.

A point in common between Svankmajer and Carroll is that both of them have a fetish about something, and they succeeded to utilize their fetish into their own work. Normally, excessive fetish should be hidden, but on the other hand, it is useful to expressive individuality. People are interested in something uncommon, at the same time, people are afraid of something uncommon. Anyhow, to get attention, such effective nature is able to provoke a simulation of seeing "forbidden things".

The work of Svankmajer has inspired some of today's most innovative contemporary filmmakers. Many creators acknowledge him as a foremost influence, and of course, his work inspires art animators like inheritance as well. For example, the influence of this absurdist's view of the world can be seen in the Brothers Quay's "*The Cabinet of Jan Svankmajer*"(1984). They are strongly motivated by Jan Svankmajer, and there are still more art animation artists who are influenced likewise. Even if some other animators are not motivated by Svankmajer, many of art animations still have eccentricity, and they also have been appreciated by the people in specific areas. It seems like they are distinguished if they are eccentric. Art animations might be taken as being only for people who appreciate cult films. But does art animation have to be not for children? It is nonsense if aesthetic beauty needs to be complicated.

Jan Svankmajer and other superb animators (like the Brothers Quay, Rene Laloux, Raoul Servais et cetera) made their own beauty by their individual sense. They just searched originality for its own sake, and as a result, such as peculiarity appeared in their works. Eccentric animations are just conspicuous because of peculiarity. However, there is another

approach to impress the audiences, and it might have more possibility. In the past, absurdity of art animation was sensational, however it is not so fresh in these days. For this reason, the following discussion will develop some ways to address ideas to audiences as innovative, or universal.

### **Origin of Art as “Beauty” and liberation from its**

Walter Benjamin said about “the secular cult of beauty” in his famous text, “*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*”.

In other words, the unique value of the “authentic” work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty. The secular cult of beauty developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic basis in its decline and the first deep crisis, which befell it. With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis, which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of “pure” art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter. (Benjamin 1973, p. 217, 218)

A key point is given to examine the context of art in the text above. Art started to preside over a shamanistic purpose at an early time. To express a holy icon, it had to be beautiful. According to Benjamin, art was developed to be a “secular cult of beauty” in human history. During its development, people have been trying several innovations to gain new aesthetic sense for worship of various beauties. As a result, people have discovered various advanced senses by the constant challenge. Through a lot of innovations of forerunners, people have acquired liberation from holiness and preconceived ideas of beauty. Therefore, liberation from previous sense made people free to express, and such freedom allows expression of taboo as well. Since that liberation, people became much more straightforward in presenting their own ideas. There is not strict restriction to avoid taboo, for example decadent imagination, political satire and so on. Even if propaganda has been controlling public information, it is much freer than in the past periods. However, it is not surely proven that contemporary people are not restricted by anything. People do not know if there is something that must be conquered. Innovation is given

by discovery at all the time. In any case, it is true the liberty in this moment is more than past.

Interestingly, there were a lot of struggles to acquire advanced freedom, and both of Svankmajer and Norstein were also involved in these struggles.

Svankmajer's career was involved with political arguments in former Czechoslovakia in the first part of his artistic career. The Czech government was not at all interested in encouraging or promoting an artist whose work represented an opposing view to the government's cultural ideology and practice, and was thus barely tolerated by the authorities. (Hames, 1995) Even though he was under pressure, he kept trying to express what he wanted, and therefore he acquired this successful achievement. His pressure from the society often appears in his work as political satire metaphorically. His caricature laughs cynically at its background.

The case of Norstein is also similar to the case of Svankmajer. The situation of the former Soviet Union reflects on his career likewise. The communist regime recognized very little of any artists' creations, like East European countries, (Hiruma, 2002) and this background appears as a melancholy atmosphere in his works. However, Norstein achieved numerous awards after several problems and finally the Russian government recognized his great accomplishment.

To present fresh expression, denial by the existing idea often occurs and will be an obstacle. In spite of their countries' strife, a lot of artists have produced some of the most amazing talents in the field of art animation from the former Communist Eastern Bloc, as well as the former Soviet Union. Being suppressed makes people have doubt against prevailing ideas, and those doubt motivate people. This may be one reason which made them produce superb works on animation, however there is still one other cause. Apparently the lack of a bourgeois market for art objects worked as an incentive for visual artists to follow their instincts and move onto "art in motion" as opposed to "art in stasis" just as early modernist artists (such as Fernand Leger, Hans Richter and so forth in French *avan-garde* film movement) would have liked to but for financial and other reasons did not. In the former communist countries the salaries were fixed.

The situation of their background was not so different, although they choose different way to approach their work. Svankmajer has broken the taboo or what is forbidden under oppressive conditions. But in the work of Norstein, any kind of repulsion is not seen. He also made a few political films about Russian history, and his eyes to see his own history firmly and receptively rather than in anger. In "*An Interview With Norshtein: To be Russian is to be in harmony with barbarianism and beauty*" (Saitani, 1996), Norstein talked about the background to his works. He mentioned about his attention, which always considers his children's reaction to animations and tries to understand life on their level. Besides his attention as a guardian, he appreciates the

subtleties of the human condition, and he brings this to his animations. Therefore Norstein's work retains a pureness even if its quality is appreciated by adult people, like the ideals of innocence and philanthropy, which shine from "*Hedgehog in the Fog*". It is sort of absolute. Otherwise, there is a risk that clear beauty could become mundane and banal.

As forerunner tried several innovations to their expressions, people are trying to find unknown facts to go further away for human desire of progression. However, even though there are several progressions and inheritances by forerunner have been established, mankind hasn't been dramatically changed. Of course, lifestyle is changing every moment, and many forms of information have become much more familiar and attainable. Personal area has been much wider than previous era. On the contrary, human nature is unable to change easily, and also basic humanity has not changed much. People have been studying advanced and esoteric concerns, and yet people live with radical instinct, such as emotion. Instinct cannot be changed, but in the meantime instinct demands progress as well. Therefore there is a paradox. People require innovation, while even instincts stay at almost, the same degree.

On account of human nature people have been carrying on the advancement towards discovery and challenge, through the innovation to preconceived ideas. Some of the innovators are trying to go further away by the offence through exploring taboos. Taboos have been discovered and consumed every moment. It brings fresh perception sometimes, and it is always followed by aroused criticism. Despite it is essential activity to vitalize creation, all activities are made from a fundamental sense developed in one's formative years. People channel their reflections from childhood into the creation of this only occasionally. Even though innovation is necessary, foundation cannot be denied. People learn common way of seeing the world through their education in childhood. On the basis of this rule, recognition of origin or fresh ideas derived from is achieved. To think about how people reflect this fundamental struggle through activity, and the examination of the influence of childhood will be followed subsequently.

### **Influence of Infancy in Art**

Like Norstein and Svankmajer, there are some artists whose work concentrates on the reflection of children's imaginary, and this does not influence only animation artists. With this in mind, the following discussion aims to examine influence from infancy upon artists by some examples.

## Fairy Tales

In childhood, all of people are familiar with fairy tales. It takes very an important role in primary educational form. There is a lot of information to introduce this world to children, and it gives great influence for fundamental sense of value, because a view of the simple rule in the fairy tales tells a systematic world for first time. This sense of value, developed at an early stage, affects people even after they have grown up, while individuality is formed through these experiences. Besides the great importance of education, the world of fairy tales hold the utopian imagination of humanity and it tells of a certain beauty synchronized with goodness. But is this connection really synchronized? Is beauty equal to goodness? For this concern, Iris Murdoch addressed these questions in "*The Sovereignty of Good*".

Good is indefinable because judgments of value depend upon the will and choice of individual.... Such a view, conceiving the good on the analogy of beautiful, would seem to make possible a contemplative attitude on the part of the moral agent, whereas the point about this person is that he is essentially and inescapably an agent. The image whereby to understand morality, it is argued, is not the image of vision but the image of movement. Goodness and beauty are not analogous but sharply contrasting ideas. (Murdoch 1970, p.3)

As she mentioned, of course it is impossible to see goodness solely by vision. 'It is function of the will.' On the other hand, Elaine Scarry's opinion is that 'aesthetic fairness' assists 'ethical fairness'. (Scarry, 2000) In her texts, beauty is described as a state of unselfishness in moral. As such, it sounds like this vision beauty is related to goodness. To illustrate this position, an exploration should be made through a study of fairytales.

In fairy tales, a symbol of goodness is often described, as a "beautiful" princess, fairy or similar, and wicked characters are always being ugly or deformed. Their descriptions are quite simple. Because the fairy tale is a brief introduction to a world of value judgment. On the other hand, it is famous that some fairy and folk tales imply a cruelty and immorality, like incest or cannibalism, in their original version, and they may have been edited many times to make them suitable for viewing by children. The world described in fairy tales is an ideal, created by adult people. They want their children to think goodness is superior to evil in the world. To examine the utility of fairy tales, an examination of "*The Use of Enchantment*"(Bettelheim 1975) will support this analysis.

In this book, Bettelheim said, 'The dominant culture wishes to pretend, particularly where children are concerned, that the dark side of man dose not exist, and professes a belief in an

optimistic meliorism.’ (Bettelheim 1975, p. 7,8) In the fairy tales, goodness always achieves a happy end. This absolute affirmation of goodness suggests how to take the life without any problems. Good behavior and not committing sins lead life better in the society. To sum up, people study basic social rules in fairy tales. The utopian world of fairy tales are not real, nevertheless, suggestions are described there. Bettelheim explained this concern as, ‘Fairy tales deal in literary form with the basic problem of life, particularly those inherent in the struggle to achieve maturity. They caution against the destructive consequences if one fails to develop higher levels of responsible selfhood’. (Bettelheim 1975, p.183) Caution is communicating that life is sometimes difficult to take through the suffering of protagonist. There are negative introductions of the world as well, like bullying and death. Children as readers relate through the same angle as the protagonist while reading the story. They would feel in a same way if central character was in fear or anxious. With the peaceful happy ending, children are given the hope and relief of surmounting a hurdle. In the real world, needless to say, evil necessarily exists, but to retain a balance and to avoid chaos, people have to keep resisting this drive towards evil. Thus, there is a happy end upon the loss of wicked character. However, wicked character is not punished all of the time in the end. For moral educational concern a plea from, it ends with the tender-heart of the protagonist to the antagonist sometimes. Therefore children learn what good behavior is. In any case, the moral superiority of virtue is always reinforced.

Some people worry that fairy tales are artificial and dangerous to tell children. They may think children would be afflicted by the gap between reality and fantasy when they are forced confront to the reality as they mature. Bettelheim claimed, ‘some people claim that fairy tales do not render a ‘truthful’ pictures of life as it is, and are therefore unhealthy. That this “truth” in the life of a child might be different from that of adults does not occur to these people. They do not realize that fairy tales do not try to describe the external world and “reality”. Nor do they recognize that no sane child ever believes that these tales describe the world realistically’. (Bettelheim 1975, p.117) At the stage of an introduction by fairy tales, children have not yet come to discover what exactly reality is. Bettelheim claimed the important thing for them at first is learning some references to make judgments by themselves. As a mater of fact, personality is formed through several judgments with collected references. Children learn standard a judgment of morality to view the real world. Through the influence of fairy tales, People use this sense for both the denial and affirmation of existing matters. Through mental development, children receive more information about reality, and they will confirm there is not a utopian world of fairy tales. But they will not be involved in a struggle between reality and

fairy tales. Because children understand that things that happen in fairy tales happened ‘in the times of yore in their mind to mean the same as “in fantasy land”...’(Bettelheim 1975, p.117) Further information is just helping children to be more flexible, and characterize own personality. The basic view stays in the conscious as a primitive sense, through which individuality is formed. Kant also said ‘the beautiful is the symbol of morally good’. (Kant 1780, p.353) Therefore basic sense of beauty is given from introduction through the introduction to this concept via the fairy tale.

People make judgments on any matter, and it is done automatically. If judgment were separated to two types, there would be individual judgment and intuitive judgment. In the case of intuitive judgment, its background is developed in early stages. There is a principal morality based on education. A fundamental sense of value is composed by educational influence and instinct in at an early stage. On the other hand, individual judgment is attained through personal experience and knowledge, as a further source of information after the introduction through fairy tales. Therefore this sort of sense of value is more controllable than intuitive sense. Due to the storage of memories, the point of view via individual judgment is changing, while fundamental sense has been strengthened the basis.

Personal experience and knowledge develop individual sense and this side of sense often prefers peculiar works that is basically not popular. Because basic reference from fairy tales cannot assist the judgment for the peculiarity. They are opposed to a basic frame of reference. On the contrary, fundamental sense is angled toward the matters commonly appreciated. In this connection, popularity may be in the permissible range of many people’s sense to be accepted widely. This similarity can be seen mainstream media, and there is causality around being accepted widely.

A basic sense of ethical values by fairy tales supports people during whole life, while experience and knowledge develop other kinds of sense as people grow up. It is linked to the concept of innovation, which breaks preconceived idea, mentioned before. Similar discovery and challenge are continually happening inside of the mind.

Further information and experiences of reality lead people to expand their sense of value. The expansion of the advanced sense of values could be felt as a mere stress on occasion. Innovation to acquire the advanced sense of value is not easy to accept, and there are many things, which seemed as nonsense at the first glance. To have good understanding of fresh concepts, people need to renew their existing way to seeing. Even though acceptance of unknown is important, thinking in other ways is often difficult. Such an expansion provokes the denial to the existing

idea and this denial is a reason of mere stress. Therefore some information, without the hard process required in understanding, is taken by wide range of people. Information is given widely is on the surface, and even un-called for information is memorized automatically. People get a lot of knowledge even if they are not interested into some of them. Widely given information from surface of the media may be forgotten quickly, but leaves an impression even if it was only short term. And also they are harmless, so people have no need to worry about being annoyed. Probably this is typical nature of controlled trends. It tempts to people to attract according to general popularity and such general popularity and pure beauty is often synchronized, because both of them are based on fundamental sense, and they are acceptable easily. This similarity brings a confusion of simplicity and universal sense. An affirmative relationship to morality is widely acceptable, however universal beauty is not equal to just being simple. It is natural to follow the moral codes based on judgment of good and evil, so it is felt uncomplicated. If one took the meaning of this position as harmless, it would be banal. For instance, trends of the film industry are changing at the time. Only a few films, regarded masterpieces are still watched. Most other films are watched and subsequently ignored. But masterpieces are not always sensational. Some of the masterpieces synchronize with of universal sense of value. The acceptable and the impressive are able to coexist in one film. In the meantime, what is seen at first as sensational will be not sensational after it generalized. To survive as high quality, there is something about absolute universal sense.

### **Edited Memory in Art**

This essay tried to examine that basic sense, which is developed in childhood earlier. In this part of essay, causality of the pure beauty and instinctive reaction to see the beauty will be analyzed with other kinds of artworks apart from animation for the broad exploration.

Pure beauty in "*Hedgehog in the Fog*" is a manifestation of innocence. However the primal idea of innocence is clean and blank. One may think it is impossible to be accompanied by an impressive significance.

Innocence is primarily an out with this "blank canvas" lack of knowledge and experience of the world, especially of evil, malevolence or unpleasant things. Children lose their innocence, as they grow older. After they become mature, then people see innocence through a nostalgic feeling. People do not remember what they were thinking in the days of childhood exactly. Therefore lost memories can be more beautiful or equally worse than reality. These

arrangements assist to balance mental condition.

When people look back the past, people are seeing direct memory unconsciously. Memory does not retain its actuality, although it becomes part of the elements of own personality. According to individual ideals, memory is arranged to help self-presentation. People are trying to bring themselves close to this ideal to feel comfort, and self, through their own eyes this is transformed for convenience by the directed memory.



*Fig.3*

Transformation of the memory often appears as nostalgia in art. Nostalgic imaginations are arranged to be beautiful in most cases. There is a longing for lost time. This poetic expression is in the works of Joseph Cornell. (*Fig.3*) His works are categorized into surrealism in a broad way despite his rejection of surreal subconscious imagery. To illustrate this concern, an episode indicates Cornell's stance. According to the essay by Dawn Ades in his catalogue, he wrote a letter of protest when Cornell was introduced as a surrealist artist in an article. In that letter, he maintained that he had never been an official surrealist. (Ades, 1980) His expression is neither about darkness nor the bizarre and complex. The art of Cornell connects to unreality like surrealists' art, although his fantasy is based on pureness.

Joseph Cornell's boxes remind about treasures in childhood. He collaged a lot of objects that symbolically express cherished moments or lost memories. The collection in the boxes is just like child precious boxes that filled up with souvenirs, tiny objects and important presents from somebody. Cornell's collaged boxes convert ordinary objects into little, illusionary worlds of poetry, myth, fantasy, and willful imaginations. Cornell's works address to viewers play with imaginations provoked by boxes. Through them, Joseph Cornell allowed viewers to visit the mystical nexus where the ordinary becomes the illusion. Artworks of Cornell express beautiful images that connect to pureness. Some of the utopia natures of the boxes evoke a longing to this pureness, just like in the fairy tales. Memory becomes a fantasy of the dream when it is digested. However Bettelheim mentioned that the fantasy of the dream and fantasy of the fairy tales are different. He said, 'To a considerable degree, dreams are the result of inner pressures which

have found no relief, of problems which beset a person to which he knows no solution and to which the dream finds none. The fairy tales does the opposite: it projects the relief of all pressures and not only offers ways to solve problem but promise that a ‘happy’ solution will be found.’(Bettelheim 1975, p.36) If Cornell’s work is viewed in this light, fantasy elements of his work are chosen images from original dreams. Carefully selected images stimulate nostalgic longing to a lost pureness. Through the nature of his work, the viewer may feel this artist stays close to such a longing as if Cornell still lives in his childhood. This point is different from the case of Lewiss Carroll.

Carroll was detached from pureness even he had a similar longing to Joseph Cornell’s. Apparently, there was a conflict with notions of pureness in Carroll’s mind. This conflict symbolizes an imaginary vision of surreal rather than pure beauty. P, Adams Sitney made a simple description about surrealism movement in the essay of “*the cinematic gaze of Joseph Cornell*”. ‘The surrealists sought the liberation of unconsciousness energies in the juxtaposition of disparate images. They cultivated the disruption of erotic and moral taboos and linked their art to political revolution.’ (Sitney 1980, p.82) This notion supports an understanding of the impression of the strangeness in surrealists’ works. In many case, the surrealist’s works contain dark imaginations in a psychoanalytic form. Surrealists portrayed in their works the world of the subconscious and of dreams. Their wish to achieve liberation from logical reality, an irritation and shift of reality - was not pursued with healthy imaginations. The transformation of memory in the case of surreal is different from the nostalgia beauty. Their transformation had gone to express another kind of beauty that might be appreciated by leaned sense rather than intuition.



Fig.4, 5

As an illustration opposed to edited manifestations of beauty in the memory, some photography by Anna Gaskell will be discussed to illustrate this comparison. Anna Gaskell’s works show ambivalence toward immaturity. (Fig.4, 5) Her works are also adapted from fairy tales, and she shot a series of photographs “*wonder*”(1996) based on “*Alice in Wonderland*”. Gaskell’s Alice is not a symbol of pureness of the virginity. In her work, Alice acts like a

monster and her act is one of enigmatic behavior. Gaskell's Alice wears costume, which Lewis Carroll described, however this stereotype outfit tells on further meaning as Alice emphasizes the difference between Alice in Carroll as innocent figure and Alice in Gaskell as an unbalanced being.

Girlhood in Gaskell's view is not a cherished moment of precious innocence; it is grotesque condition. The human being under development can be trapped into chaos of imperfection expressed through romanticism. Therefore both beauty and ugliness coexist in her "wonder". Anna Gaskell casts a reflection of ambiguous strangeness into real life to investigate the fantastic and worrying aspects of contemporary life. (Specter, 2001) So, her use of childhood differs from Cornell, and thus make viewer remain an idle onlooker. Cornell's boxes symbolize the ideal pureness of infancy, although Gaskell's girls symbolize the conflict of adolescence. In the term of adolescence, young people are trying to figure the way to present their self. Sigmund Freud said, 'In their childhood they had these evil impulses pure and simple, and turned them into acts so far as importance of childhood allowed.' (Freud 1950, p.161) At the first stage of learning of world, children are introduced to a basic rule briefly however they have not learned yet how to turn this rule into suitable behavior to individual act. Thus they can make themselves a monster or a king in their own eyes. Ignorance can be offensive. They don't consider their surroundings very well. And secondly, children can be conscious about their self in their environment. Children do know that the real world is not as simple as in fairy tales. Since infancy, children will have a conflict in the search for their self-position in the adolescent years through which they confront to reality. This confusion is not about fantasy and reality. It is about a self-state in this reality. Since entering adolescence, people have to start to survive in the society, without the protection of their parents. For this survival in society, children try to evaluate their self-state. Otherwise people will ignore or forget about such conflicts after they grown up. Because it reminds people of some kind of anxiety with uncomfortable memories. Gaskell presents this hidden past and made it attractive. Viewers prefer not to remember vivid personal memories of an unbalanced age, although they are interested to see it subjectively. This is still relates to seeing "forbidden things" = taboos. Taboos are somehow attractive. Freud said taboo has a sense of something 'unapproachable'. It is quite a 'mysterious attribute'. (Freud, 1950) Freud discussed ambivalent feelings to taboos with strange example of the killing of father. This example is about brothers who killed and devoured their father in ancient times. He explained the reason for this murder and cannibalism as coming from hate and the longing to father. They had a fear, but they admired its sources as well, therefore, he continued to explain

the power of the father became greater than before he died. To put a taboo in this light, taboo is balancing on the forbidden and sacred. People claim possession of the unobtainable unconsciously. Curiosity for the Pandora's box leads people to have an interest the taboo. However human nature is normally on the positive side of ethics, which makes stability of the world. If people broke the basic rules owing to a curiosity for taboos, both the whole world and individuality would break down to chaos. Thus people know how to suppress this forbidden curiosity, and basically they share peaceful enjoyment with many others. Human happiness is based on the morality. People need to see something beautiful and this desire occurs in the process of editing memory as well.

In any case, memory does not remain an actuality. Here is a remark from the essay in by Maria Morris Hamburg. 'Memory digests and stores original experience in representations that are personally coloured, recast by the imagination. Creativity seems to work in much the same way; it swallows its impetus in order to reconstitute it in a more consequent and permanent guise.' (Hamburg 1995, p.54) All of existence is not certain, on account of different perceptions via individuality. Therefore memory is no longer a fact if it is once digested; however it implies a great possibility to vitalize imagination. As Hamburg mentioned, it is similar to creativity. People digest ideas to make them visible via imagination. Function of memorizing is search of source for any kind of activity. People digest memory to provoke beautiful imaginations unconsciously, because of that fact instinct pursues happiness, and happiness and beautiful imaginary is engaged together. But why is it engaged? C.G. Jung analyzed this instinct in the essay, "*The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*"(1959). Jung developed idea of the unconscious formed by Freud to divide into two parts: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The personal unconscious of Jung is resembled to unconscious of Freud. It is influenced by surroundings like environments and experiences and the action by the personal unconscious is determined without awareness of its sources. The collective unconscious differs from unconscious of Freud. It is provided at the start of life. Any influences by experiences and environments cannot change this condition. Jung's idea suggests human mentality is assisted by the part of collective unconscious on the basis. In the collective unconscious, human instinct operates with the archetype. The archetype is a frame of physiological sense of feeling. And its ideal state is a harmony. As evidence of its existence, Jung saw universal symbols as primitive images of god and myth around the world. (Jung, 1959) If there is a universal viewpoint to figure the world at an unconscious level, like Jung's

opinion, this connection of beauty and happiness may be related to this archetype. Feeling beauty gives harmony of psych. To value the fine state of matters is useful for identification of personal understanding ability. Meanwhile, awareness works toward self-valuation. Therefore universal beauty according to instinct is fair and absolute. People are able to have sympathy to the same kinds of beauty with other people, and a peaceful world is common ideal of people.

### **Expression of thoughts or intuitions**

The way that standard beauty gives pleasure to the onlooker is because of human instinct. The advantage of this common beauty is that its nature as easy to understand.

However, an understandable point cannot always appear in the creation of the art. The aesthetical view on the contemporary or modern art is becoming more complicated in recent times—or, to put it another way, it is constantly hard to innovate new movements as each era follows after another. Fine art has often been a logical argument since conceptual art became conspicuous. The idea behind of the piece of artwork is on a prerequisite. It is impossible to create something without thought and intention. If they were created without intention, works of art would have no meaning. On the expression, motive dose not have to come up with the absolute aim. But it needs to have at least the idea as the source for its development. Therefore this source idea is an important element of the creation.

Somehow “conceptual” sounds dignified. Concepts brought from deep thinking imply profound meaning. On account of this weigh of meaning, art holds great importance in culture, and it has taken on a virtuous role for some people. However if an approach could succeed to give impulse to a universal aesthetic of beauty, work of art can be taken by its significance in common with that of a wide range of people. Art doesn’t have to target public popularity, yet art isn’t for just a few people who are already interested.

Immanuel Kant said, fine art would be divided into that of the expression of thoughts or intuitions. (Kant, 1987) Apparently majority of contemporary art belongs to the expression of thoughts. When people appreciate a work of art, they need to judge by individual references. This judgment is given by ‘empirical interest’ in a word of Kant. According to Kant, judgment of beauty refers to feeling pleasure or displeasure. If it is so, there is only one kind of beauty, and beauty on peculiarity would be not called as beauty, This idea bring a suspicion that beauty has possibly become unnecessary attribute for fine art nowadays. However there are some people who prefer beauty in extra original senses, which dose not give a common pleasure.

Art as an expression of thoughts is interesting due to the vitalization of creation, and it is quite an intelligent activity. Although universal beauty takes on a valuable role in art. The positive reaction to human instinct requires a sharing of sympathy, and brings relief by this feeling of connection. The aim of the fine art is neither being generalized, nor giving pleasure. It is much freer to experiment divorced from any kind of restriction, however enjoyment can often be left. Contemporary art recourse to “empirical interest” rather than instinct. And it is mostly profound and this aspect is looked upon as pompous on occasion. Of course there are some works, which are able to be please by passers-by whom, even without knowledge, or a comprehension of its meaning. This sort of work is a paragon. Another paragon is approach by the sensibility of universal beauty, which accompanies a fresh angle. There is not an easy way to impress in every expression, although it is important to find possibilities.

## Conclusion

In this essay, I attempted, in the first sections, to compare and contrast the sense of beauty in the works of Yuri Norstein and Jan Svankmajer, and to explore their background through an art context, in the second. In order to construct the argument clearly, causality between backgrounds and creations are, though briefly, described. It is followed by a discussion on the childhood influence on art through exploration of the concerns of fairy tales, edited memory in art and the expression of thoughts or intuitions.

Fairy tales as discussed in this essay are about the formation of basic sense by the fairy tale’s ethical relevance, nature of judgment, relation with individual sense. Edited memory in art is about the nostalgia of Joseph Cornell, the similarity and difference of Cornell’s work and surrealist’s fantasy, the ambivalent fear in Anna Gaskell’s “*wonder*” and the digested memory by imagination. Expression of thoughts or intuition is illustrated through an exploration of Kant’s theory to analyze beauty in fine art.

Judgment by ‘empirical interest’ has brought art to a logic argument. To think of this point, contemporary people seem to live cerebrally. However if the only proof of human existence is a body that touches the world then its radical instinct of being is certain. Thus people could rely on natural sensitivity more to lead a useful life.

Norstein’s works imply universal beauty, and his works are not reduced to commonplace entertainment even if this could be widely acceptable. His animation will not assimilate with

public popularity in terms of huge box-office success, but it has greater potential to touch many heartstrings than works originating in a strange and surreal world.

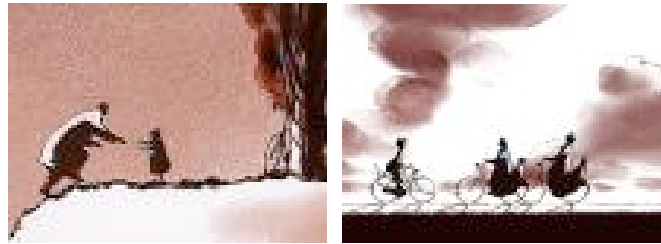


Fig.6, 7

The current art animation scene has been getting away from the domination of eccentric works. Inheritance from Jan Svankmajer to other artists is known much more than before and it is not regarded anymore as innovative. The next generation is coming. For example, the short animation “*Father and Daughter*”(2000) by Michael Dudok de Wit has been celebrated by numerous awards includes BAFTA Award Winner for short animated film (2000) and Oscar Academy Award® Winner for short animated film (2000). (Fig.6, 7) In eight short minutes, Dutch animator Michael Dudok de Wit presents a moving visual poem about the quiet longing a daughter feels for her father as she travels through life. Norstein mentioned this work as “a deep echo to the heart without specific complication.” (*Father and Daughter* 2000, DVD booklet, p. 6) “*Father and Daughter*” is neither by high technology computing nor a lot of layers of cell animation. It is just made by simple drawing of charcoal and pencil without dialogue. However its quality impresses the viewer and its artistic sense is recognized. Art as animation in itself has not actually fallen into category well. However such categorization is an unnecessary limitation. Superb works are superb whatever they are.

It is not always a right judgment to feel bored by the simplicity of universal beauty. People often prefer to use reason rather than instinct for judgment, because, they want to give fair judgment through subjectivity. Expression of thoughts by logic and complication affect conceptual activity, thus it is significant. However it is possible to create superb works devoid of those acute angles. Firm approach of universal beauty without acute angles can be accepted softly, and then art could be more closed to human everyday life with retain of its significance. Art is not the supreme human activity. It is just part of culture, therefore it is more desirable if is as approachable as a friend.

## Bibliography

- Arts Council of Great Britain (1979) *Film as film : formal experiment in film, 1910-1975*  
London: The Council, Hayward Gallery
- Ades, D. (1980) The Transcendental Surrealism of Joseph Cornell. Sitney, P, A. (1980) The Cinematic Gaze of Joseph Cornell. In: Mcshine, K. ed. *Joseph Cornell*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art.
- Benjamin, W. (1973) *Illuminations*. London: Fontana Press.
- Bettelheim, B. (1976) *The Use of Enchantment*. London: Penguin Books.
- Cohen, M. N. (1995) *Lewis Carroll: a Biography*. London: Papermac.
- Freud, S. (1960) *Totem and Taboo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd.
- Hamburg, M. (1995) Polke's Recipes for Arousing the Soul. In: Ferguson, R. ed. (1995) *Photoworks: When Pictures Vanish, Sigmar Polke*. Los Angeles, California: Museum of Contemporary Art
- Hames, P. ed. (1995) *Dark Alchemy: The Films of Jan Svankmajer*. Cinema voices series; Vol.2  
Trowbridge: Flicks.
- Hiruma, Y. (2002) *Euro Animations* Tokyo: Film Art.
- Jung, C. G. (1959) *The Archetype and The Collective Unconscious*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., Princeton University Press., Bolling Foundation Inc.
- Kant, I. (1987) *Critique of Judgment*. Indiana: Hackett.
- Murdoch, I. (1971) *The Sovereignty of Good*. London: Routledge,
- Saitani, R. (1996) An Interview With Norshtein | To be Russian is to be in harmony with barbarianism and beauty, *Comic Box*, vol. 104 (12) pp.78-82.
- Scarry, E. (1999) *On Beauty and Being just*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co Ltd.
- Specter, N. (2002) An Exquisite Unease. In: Gaskell, Anna. *Caesura / by Anna Gaskell / story by Thom Jones / afterword by Nancy Spector*. New York: powerHouse.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1971) *Playing and Reality*. London: Routledge
- Alice* (1987) Directed by Jan Svankmajer, Condor Film/ Hessicher Rundfunk/ Film Four International, 84mins [Video : VHS]
- The Cabinet of Jan Svankmajer* (1984) Directed by Brothers Quay, Atelier Koninck, 14mins [Video : VHS]
- Fantastic Planet* (1973) Directed by Rene Laloux, Argos Film, 72mins [Video : DVD]
- Father and Daughter* (2000) Directed by Michel Dudok de Wit, Cine Te Filmproductie b.v. en Cloudrunner Ltd, 8mins [Video : DVD]

*Hedgehog in the Fog* (1975) Directed by Yuri Norstein, Soyuzmultfilms studio, 10mins [Video : DVD]

*Nocturnal Butterflies* (1998) Directed by Raoul Servais, Anagram, 8mins [Video : DVD]

*Tales of Tale* (1979) Directed by Yuri Norstein, Soyuzmultfilms studio, 29mins [Video : DVD]