

Panel I3

Sala Emiciclo

Sound, Music and Animation

María Lorenzo Hernandez

Impromptu and the Illusion of Movement. The Making of a Music Film



Like a precinematographic toy, this paper will *revolve around* the realization of an independent animation short film: *Impromptu*, directed by María Lorenzo and produced by Enrique Millán in Spain, during 2016 and 2017. The production of the film is currently sponsored by the Valencian Cultural Commission.

Impromptu is a tribute to the origins of film through its forgotten *parents*, such as Joseph Plateau and his devices; Eadweard Muybridge's, Jules Marey's and Ottomar Anschütz's chronophotographies; or William Dickson's, Louis Le Prince's and George Demeny's cinematographic machines, all them invented prior to the 1885 Lumières' Cinematograph, for cinema is not the invention of a single person, not two, but many of pioneers who contributed their ideas and innovations in the late nineteenth century. But *Impromptu* is also a homage to that *Fin-du-siècle* period, to their unforgettable female muses —such as Loïe Fuller, Carmencita or Anna Belle—, and to the fascination for movement itself. The animation creates on the surface of the film the waves of inspiration, the violent and instant perception of the photographed truth that is, as well, historical truth.

Impromptu often takes from the wonderful early film footage to show the ingenuity and beauty of their time, but *Impromptu* is mainly a music film, an *improvised* movie, inspired by five piano *Etudes* by Fryderyk Chopin, making each fragment of the film develop as a *study* in itself, where a different difficulty or challenge arises for the animator. As for the pioneers of the cinema, the great achievement of this project is the exploration of movement, which in this case will be made by drawing and painting, taking to limit its expressive possibilities.

As well, *Impromptu* appropriates a series of visual themes from Modernism — and its geographical variants: French Art Nouveau, Viennese Secession, etc., because in these art works, like pattern design, jewelry, furniture or every day objects, movement is a major concern, accordingly to many other creations of the time, aside cinema. As well, the drawings by the artists from the Catalan café *Els Quatre Gats*, as Ramon Casas, Ricard Opisso, or Pablo Ruiz Picasso, obsessed with capturing the living in their rapid sketches, has provided the key to conceive many scenes visually.

Impromptu is divided into five short pieces of poetic content, with an average duration of one and a half minutes. Each piece focuses on a different theme: *Prelude* is animated from only 16 pictures like Plateau's Phenakistoscopes; *Serpentine* takes from early films and chronophotographies; *Faces* reunites almost three hundred different drawings of models posing that move to evoke Demeny's film portraiture; *The Man on the Train* will conjure up Louis Le Prince's mysterious disappearance on board a train; and finally *The Wave* develops from Jules Marey's first chronophotographic film, featured in 1891 at La Revue Générale des Sciences.

Among the animation references of the project are *Satiemanía* (Zdenko Gasparovich, 1978), a key film in the history of animation, and the successful *Carnival of Animals* (Michaela Pavlátová, 2006), as well as Koji Yamamura's tributes to early filmmakers *Pieces* (2003) and *Muybridge's Strings* (2011). But it is also remarkable the influence of animators such as Paul Bush (*The Five Minutes Museum*, 2015) and Gil Alkabetz (*The Da Vinci Time Code*, 2009) in the premise of editing several scenes where movement arises from inanimate pictorial images that are animated by their combination to a larger group of pictures, establishing a dynamic relation with them.

At present, three-fifths of the short film are already produced, and it is hoped to be able to make the premiere during the Padova SAS conference. The finished scenes up to date can be watched as independent pieces following these links:

Prelude: <https://vimeo.com/196784801>

Password: **plateau1**

Serpentine: <https://vimeo.com/176075881>

Password: **loie1**

Faces: <https://vimeo.com/161619706>

Password: **faces1**

Biography

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María Lorenzo Hernández (Alicante, 1977), PhD in Fine Arts, is a Senior Lecturer in Animation at Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain. She is a member of the Researching Group in Animation: Art & Industry, at UPV. Her main areas of interest are related to animation as an artistic language, and to the interchange between film, animation and literature. She is an awarded filmmaker, who has directed short animation films such as *Portrait of D.* (2004), *The Carnivorous Flower* (2009), or the collective project *The Cat Dances with its Shadow* (2012), screened at international animation festivals such as Annecy, Anima Mundi, Anima Brussels, London, Zagreb or Anifest; her latest film, *The Night Ocean* (2015), adapting a tale by Robert Barlow and H.P. Lovecraft, was nominated to the Spanish Academy of Film "Goya" Awards, 2016. As a researcher, María Lorenzo has delivered papers regularly at the Society for Animation Studies annual conferences since 2007, and she was keynote speaker at CONFIA 2015 – The International Conference in Illustration & Animation (Portugal). She has published essays in *Animation Studies*, *Animation Journal*, *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, and *Animation: Practice, Process & Production*, and contributed regularly to *Animac Magazine* (Spain) and *Animation Reporter* (India); she has also published papers in film journals like *L'Atalante* or *Secuencias. Revista de historia del cine*. She has collaborated in the book *Animated Landscapes* (Bloomsbury, 2015), edited by Chris Pallant, and more recently in *La animación adulta* (Sendemà, 2017). From 2011, she edits *Con A de animación*, a journal publication that promotes animation studies among Spanish and South American scholars; *Con A de animación* is indexed in Web of Science. María Lorenzo was instructor at the Master in Animazione Digitale at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Palermo, Italy (2011-12), and currently she teaches Concept Art at the Animation Masters Degree in Universitat

Politècnica de València. She has also curated exhibitions and she has been a jury at festivals such as Annecy (France), and the prestigious Gijón International Film Festival (Spain).