

Cities of the Past - Brugge

(Cités Antérieures -Brugge)

Author & director : Christian Boustani; **Digital art** : Alain Escalle; **Music designer** : Cécile Le Prado; **Editing** : Franck Magnant; **Director of Photography** : Lionel Legros; **Set decorator** : Valerie Raymond; **Costumes designer**: Delphine Dy; **Producer** : Colette Chevrier; **Cast** : Alain Brugnago, Charles Martigue, Didier Colfs, Carlos Moens, Anton Dejaegere, André Raibaut; **Coproduction** : Vidéo Lune, Canal +, Mikros Image, Magic Company, Grand Canal, BRT, Periscope Production; **Technical standard** : Digital D 1, 16:9 or 4:3; **Sound** : Stereo; **Lenth** : 11'30"; **Year** : 1995.

Synopsis

Bruges, the northern and medieval city, between land and sea, is exposed to the misfortune of time. Natural and endemic calamities succeed one another, set upon the town to tannish it. Aware of its decline, Bruges is waiting for its Renaissance...

In the heart of the city, as an inspired alchemist, the painter is searching for a new material. He mingles with his breath, pigment and oil, concentrates color and light, transparency and solidity. Finding the secret of oil-painting will allow him to offer a chance of eternity to the city.

Concept

This film shows what the Middle Ages could represent for us through the primitive Flemish Paintings, without being restricted to a faithful historical reconstruction.

This world of fantasy combines legends, popular and religious rituals, generating a story, finding a meaning, recreating connections between fake and reality.

Some characters appear like points of reference in this world of fake. They mingle to details from the paintings of Jan Van Eyck, Hans Memling, Pieter Bruegel and Heronimus Bosch. They bring to light what archives hide : the secret of oil-painting discovered more than five hundred years ago. A secret that was probably hidden behind the heavy silence of stone...

Technical development

Digital image work was essential for Bruges, from the conception and plastic viewpoints. *Henry Paint Box* was required for computer treatment of most of the film, but some of the most complex sequences needed more efficient computers like Discreet Logic's *Flame*.

This specific computer allowed to recompose some of the main sequences of the film, animating several layers of heterogeneous elements at one time. Shots in Bruges, real characters (filmed on a blue screen), fragments of paintings, ships and crane models - all these elements create together an almost theatrical composition.

Those sequences are for instance, the waking through a distorting mirror, the recalling of Bruges' harbour, the flying over a canal slowly freezing up, or paintings oozing colors in a museum.

The off-line editing was made using the editing computer system *Video Cube*, with *Photoshop* software. The final editing was made using Quantel's *Edit Box*.

The deliberate choice of the sound treatment required a portable MacIntosh computer that was used in the several post-production places. So the musical score was made at the same time as the image editing.

From the beginning, the stress was laid on hybridation. Therefore *AudioSculpt*, a software designed by IRCAM was notably used to create "sound morphing" between city sounds and ancient instruments. The sound editing as well as some treatments were made using *Sound Designer* software. At last, *Deck*, a multitrack software was used before ending the sound process.

Christian Boustani

Since 1986, Christian Boustani has been interested in the connections between video and painting. He explores a painter's world (**Faces**), directs variations on some painter's obsessions (**Sketches**), before undertaking the **Cities of the Past** trilogy.

In the first part, **Siena**, he underlined the poetic vision of this city, hunting its heritage, mixing together past and present. **Bruges**, thanks to narration, allowed him to reconstitute the dusty atmosphere of the city, at the beginning of Renaissance.

Christian Boustani shares his time between his film activities and video teaching at Paris I University (St Charles).

Videography

- 1986 - Faces (Figures)
- 1988 - Sketches (Esquisses)
- 1990 - Triptyque de Bruges (installation)
- 1991 - FNAC 00070
- 1992 - Cities of the Past - Siena (Cités Antérieures - Siena)
- 1995 - Cities of the Past - Bruges (Cités Antérieures - Brugge)
- 1997 - Cities of the Past - Toledo (Cités Antérieures - Toledo)

Awards & Grants

- 1992 - "Work of Special Distinction" for Cities of the Past - Siena ; *The 15th Tokyo Video Festival (Japan)*.
- 1993 - "Prix de la Ville de Clermont-Ferrand" for Cities of the Past - Siena; *Festival Vidéoformes (France)*.
- 1993 - "Grand Prix SCAM de la Vidéo de Création" for Cities of the Past - Siena; *SCAM (France)*.
- 1993 - 2 nominations: "Best Camera" & "Best Editing" for Cities of the Past - Siena; *International Monitor Awards, U.S.A.*
- 1993 - Winner of the "Villa Médicis Hors les Murs".
- 1996 - "Silver FIPA" for Cities of the Past - Brugge; *Festival International de Programmes Audiovisuels, Biarritz (France)*.
- 1996 - "1er Prix PIXEL-INA" in the art category for Cities of the Past - Brugge; *Festival Imagina, Monte-Carlo (Monaco)*.
- 1996 - "Distinction for the best soundtrack" awarded by the CST and the SACEM for Cities of the Past - Brugge; *Festival Imagina, Monte-Carlo (Monaco)*.
- 1996 - "Grand Prix du Jury" for Cities of the Past - Brugge; *Festival International de Vidéo Liège (Belgium)*.