



SNAIL TRAIL - SHORT FILM

PHILIPP ARTUS

"The totality of Artus's vision is startlingly beautiful. Snail Trail, quite simply, uses computer animation in ways that we have not seen before, and the results are astounding."

Jerry Beck & Amidi Amid, Cartoon Brew

SYNOPSIS:

A snail invents the wheel and goes through a cultural evolution to finally get back to its origin.

THE IDEA

The basic idea of the work is inspired by processes of exponential acceleration, which can be observed at different levels. Thus, the evolution of life proceeds at an extremely slow pace for more than 3 billion years, until it suddenly seems to explode in the Cambrian period. The tools of human beings progress relatively little during the Stone Age until there comes a rapid cultural development during the Holocene. Nowadays, a similar acceleration process is generated by the exchange of information through the internet. From this perspective, the exponential spiral on a snail shell may almost appear like a miraculous wink of nature.

TOOLBOX

I rigged and animated the character in 3ds Max. Then I projected the animation with a laser on a phosphorescent material and recorded it frame by frame with Dragon Stop Motion. Finally, I did the post production with After Effects. It was a very time consuming process, but I like the unique style that it creates. It looks somehow digital but has also the feeling of a hand-drawn animation.

CHALLENGES

The animation is based on a laser sculpture (<https://vimeo.com/27659555>), which has a somehow purer and darker feeling than the film. For me the challenge was to

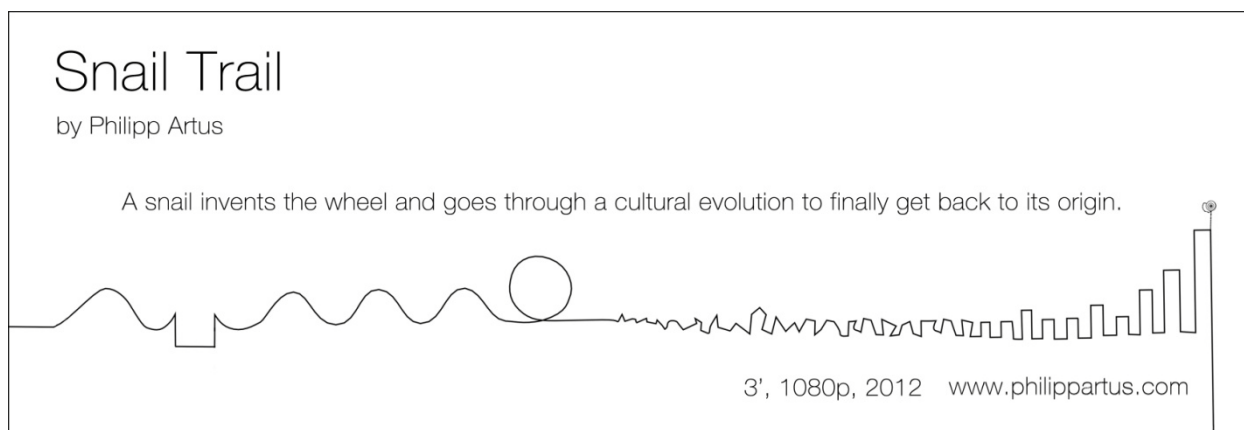
find the right tone for the film, to make it into something else than a mere copy of the laser installation. It took me some time to realize that I had to free my mind from the original character and to give space to an evolution. Finally, the film turned out much brighter and more colorful than I had imagined in the beginning.

LESSONS LEARNED

In the animation the snail goes through various metamorphoses. Working on the project was quite a similar experience: in the beginning I just wanted to do a normal animation with a snail. Through experimentation I then discovered the phosphorescent light trails, which add a unique sense of time to the animation. Later I had the idea to project the laser onto a 360° cylinder, so that the audience would have to walk around to follow the course of the snail. Finally, I created the film version, which again turned into something completely different from what I had originally in mind. Thus, the snail taught me the lesson to be fluid, to leave space for the evolution of your creations. Or as Bruce Lee puts it: "Empty your mind. Be formless, shapeless – like water..."

INSPIRATIONS

My inspirations come from being in nature, observing animals and the way they move. The drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, Alberto Giacometti and M. C. Escher have also inspired me. As a kid I played video games a lot, which probably had an unconscious influence. I also used to do a lot of skateboarding and I love surfing – which might be an inspiration for the motion. The sound was influenced by various musicians, ranging from classical ambient drones to electronic post-dubstep beats. Additionally, I had a very creative collaboration with the Portuguese musician Madalena Graça. Finally, the Vimeo community and the rapid change of our world through the digital era have also inspired my work.



Artist biography:

Philipp Artus (*1982) grew up in Bremen/Germany and began studying art at the École des Beaux Arts in Nantes/France. He continued his autodidactic studies of animation and music theory in Portugal and is currently finishing his graduation project at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne/Germany.

His experimental animations and site-specific installations explore the manifestations of life through movement, sound and imagery. He composes audiovisual experiences that unite playful elements with minimalist structures, timeless themes with contemporary observations, turbulent acceleration with contemplative silence.

His projects have been shown in various museums, festivals and galleries around the world including the SIGGRAPH conference in Los Angeles, Museum of Contemporary Art Kanazawa/Japan; European Media Art Festival in Osnabrück/Germany; Athens Video Art Festival in Greece; Videoformes in Clermont-Ferrand/France; LUMINALE in Frankfurt/Germany and the Vimeo Awards in New York City.

Snail Trail Short Film - Selected Screenings

2013 Setouchi Triennale, Megijima Island, Japan

2013 Savannah International Animation Festival, USA

2013 Slamdance Film Festival, Park City, USA

2013 Monstra Animation Festival, Lisbon/Portugal

2013 Landshuter Kurzfilmfestival, Germany

2013 UAMO Art Festival, Munich/Germany

2013 Videoformes, Clermont-Ferrand, France

2013 Traverse Video Toulouse. France

2013 Shortfilm Festival Clermont-Ferrand, Soirée Allemande, France

2013 FIPA, Biarritz, France

2013 Anima Festival Brussels, Belgium

2012 SIGGRAPH ASIA, Animation Theatre, Singapore

2012 Leeds International Film Festival, UK

2012 Animateka International Animated Film Festival, Ljubljana/Slovenija

2012 Filmfest Düsseldorf, Germany

2012 VAFA Festival, Macau, China

2012 Digital Marrakech Festival, Morocco

2012 Young Collection, Bremen, Germany

2012 Visual Music Awards (winner), Frankfurt, Germany

2012 ALTER-NATIVE Short Film Festival, Targu-Mures, Romania

2012 FIVA II, Festival Internacional de Videoarte, Buenos Aires, Argentina

2012 Anilogue International Animation Festival, Vienna/Budapest

2012 VIDEOMEDEJA, Novi Sad, Serbia

2012 Kassel Dok & Videofest, Germany

2012 Dok Leipzig, Germany

2012 KLEX - Kuala Lumpur Experimental Film & Video Festival

2012 International Cycling Film Festival Bochum, Germany

2012 Anim'est International Animation Film Festival, Bucharest/Romania

2012 BALKANIMA 2012, Belgrade, Serbia

2012 World Festival of Animated Film Varna, Bulgaria

2012 SIMULTAN Festival Timisoara, Romania

2012 Cronosfera Festival Alessandria, Italy

2012 Lausanne Underground Film and Music Festival, Switzerland

2012 GIRAF Festival & EMMEDIA Gallery, Calgary/Canada

2012 Rencontres Audiovisuelles, Les Tres Courts, Lille, France

2012 Cartoon Brew Online Student Animation Festival