

# DRAC MAGIC'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY INTERVIEW

## Audio-visual culture at the centre of reflection

The thing with magic dragons is that they can appear everywhere, ready and willing to fuel a few fires. Drac Magic is everywhere – they have a hand in every step of the film dissemination process and they actively give shape to the theoretical and social framework in which they desire to work. Their ideas are outspoken, and so are their actions. Celebrating their 50th anniversary, they're still true to Drac Magic's initial ideals, but flexible enough to have them evolving according to the needs of today. The entire team sat together to find answers to ECFA's pressing questions.

"Drac Màgic was founded in Barcelona in 1971 with the aim of promoting children's film. It broke new ground in the dissemination of film and film education, organising screenings and workshops that drew thousands of children and young people. Over five decades, it has helped to push the audio-visual world into different educational, social and cultural spheres, framing film culture as a tool for critical thought and reflection. In this re-

gard, drawing attention to education, audio-visual content for children and the feminist perspective represent core issues that define our work."

**As a social initiative cooperative, your mission is "to generate thoughts and actions around images to contribute to the construction of a responsible, active and creative society."**

Drac Màgic's objectives have evolved over the past 50 years, due to changes in the social context, and the technological evolution. What has remained constant, however, is a desire to place audio-visual culture at the centre of reflection and action and highlight its social importance.

**And "our projects aim to contribute to social transformation." Cinema can change our world?**

Absolutely. In a world made of images, being able to interpret them, understand their tacit meaning, knowing who they serve and to what end is crucial to establish a critical relationship with the world. The images



Marta Nieto Postigo & Marga Almirall (Drac Magic)

and narratives broadcast by the media influence how our imaginations are constructed and transmit a series of embedded values that may lead, among other things, to a biased view of the world, including stereotyped attitudes regarding femininity and masculinity, misogynist violence, unequal perceptions of emotional and sexual relationships, as well as racist and colonial mentalities. Audio-visual education helps to decode the mechanisms of images and their messages. Drac Màgic's work is geared towards

imagining possible futures based on various forms of ecofeminism, an awareness of diversity and the prospect of peace. We want the audio-visual world to be a tool for developing a reality that does not yet exist.

**When comparing the zeitgeist in which Drac Màgic was founded with that of today, what changes have you seen?**

Drac Màgic was founded during a social and political period in which Spain was still under a Francoist regime,

culture was heavily censored and all languages other than Spanish were prohibited. The creation of a cultural cooperative that promoted children's film in Catalan was a remarkable milestone for the time. In 1976, Drac Màgic, together with two other Catalan associations, made possible the dubbing of the first children's film in Catalan. *THREE WISHES FOR CINDERELLA* (Václav Vorlíček) featured a determined heroine and would become a classic for many. And in 1993 the Barcelona Int'l Women's Film Festival was the first cultural feminist project to call attention to the contributions of women filmmakers. All in all, Drac Màgic has blazed an innovative path.

### Is the focus of your work local, regional, provincial, national?

We work throughout Spain, yet particularly in Catalonia. For instance, most of our on-site activities revolve around the context of Catalonia. However, our interests lie in working with local agents, the cultural and social fabric, who work in the street in cooperation with local residents. We want to reach all corners of the country, from the largest city to the smallest town...

### ... facing different language barriers?



DRAC MAGIC'S KINOSAURE 2

To us, languages are not a barrier. On the contrary, they are an enrichment. Drac Màgic was founded for the purpose of contributing to the normalisation of Catalan. Accessibility has therefore always been our priority. We dub in Catalan, Spanish and Basque when we can and subtitle films with the dual aim of encouraging young viewers to read and making films accessible to a hard of hearing audience.

### To reach your goals, you started a distribution brand under the name of Pack Màgic, operating in a competitive, commercial system.

Today, the way in which we consume films is very different. We carry them around in our pockets; when Drac

Màgic was founded, going to the cinema was a much more common activity. From 1977 to 2005, Drac Màgic had a children's film distributor called Distribucions Imatge, through which it distributed over 40 titles. In 2014, we used this experience to revive Pack Màgic. With this brand, we distribute 4 to 5 children's films a year that are screened in major cinemas, and also exhibited in a broad network of cultural centres, town halls, schools, museums... We also generate teaching materials, organise cultural activities around the films, engage in promotion and produce follow-on materials, all to extend the life of the films. We take great care when selecting the films we distribute, because we want them to remain relevant for a long

time.

### Recently the online platform "Pack Màgic on Demand" was added to your distribution network.

We advocate watching film in cinemas, which is why we create numerous activities that promote the collective screening experience. However, we also believe that everyone should have the chance to watch these films. The "Pack Màgic on demand" platform enables people to watch our films online at home. Furthermore, at the height of the pandemic, we created the educational platform "Pack Màgic at school", which allows schools to show films in the classroom.

### One of these cinema projects carries the intriguing name "Kinosauare".

The Kinosauare project extends the cinematic experience beyond the screen. The project transforms cinemas into spaces for play and imagination: the magical Kinosauare creature travels the world collecting stories in the form of films. The project transforms cinemas through lighting and decoration and proposes participatory activities that introduce children to some of film's basic elements: light, movement, animation... The content and length of the films are adapted to

suit each age group. For instance, the Kinosaur can come with 30 minute programmes, short films... allowing us to screen a type of production that would otherwise never make it to cinemas.

**To help us understand your criteria, can you name a few “typical Drac Màgic films”?**

Drac Màgic has worked with numerous films that contribute to creating broader worldviews, respectful of diversity and free of violence. Recently, we are extremely pleased to distribute BINTI (Frederike Migom), due to its narration of the complex reality of migration from the point of view of a 12 year old girl; MARONA'S FANTASTIC TALE (Anca Damian), a unique work of art in motion; the historical rigour taken with FRITZI, A REVOLUTIONARY TALE (Matthias Bruhn, Ralf Kukula), which transports us through time and space to the falling of the Berlin Wall, and HELLO WORLD! (Anne-Lise Koehler, Éric Serre), a magnificent plunge into a pond populated by stop-motion paper animals.

**Your anniversary is celebrated through a series of titles compiled in a “50 years, 50 films” list.**

In the virtual exhibition “50 years of audio-visual culture stories” we have

made a symbolic selection of 50 titles which hold a special place in the history of Drac Màgic. These films include classics such as BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN and THE GREAT DICTATOR, films by directors such as Agnès Varda and Claire Simon and films distributed by our Distribucions Imatge and Pack Màgic brands, such as THREE WISHES FOR CINDERELLA and LONG WAY NORTH.

**Among the celebrative events is also a virtual exhibition.**

In “50 years of audio-visual culture stories”, delving into the Drac Màgic archives, we explore our innovative contributions in each line of action. And we'll be hosting several seminars on audio-visual education in December 2021. While they are due to take place in Barcelona, professionals throughout Europe can follow them online.

**With the Women's Film Festival, you surpass the children's audience.**

The Barcelona Int'l Women's Film Festival, launched in 1993, was the first cultural project to call attention to the contributions of women filmmakers such as Agnès Varda, Chantal Akerman and Alice Guy. 29 years later, the Festival has shown over 2,000 films by roughly 1,000 directors, with a line-up



THREE WISHES FOR CINDERELLA

of activities that runs throughout the year. In addition to activities in Barcelona, we also hold events in other cities, as well as online. In 2022, we'll celebrate the 30th anniversary of the festival with, among other events, a series of school activities, as part of a project revolving around human rights.

**Isn't it discouraging to realise how our industry mainly targets white middle class children? Do you have specific strategies to break through that barrier?**

There is no single guidebook for responding to the violence perpetrated by a patriarchal, colonial and ecocidal system. However, feminists have taught us to challenge male-orient-

ed, hetero-patriarchal and capitalist ways of doing things, and their ideas contain a number of valuable alternatives. Some of the lessons that may be applied include not imposing one single model for cultural events; taking the public's needs seriously and building ideas together; forming networks of cooperation; generating value dynamics that refrain from competitive practices; keeping a close eye on identity balance when organising activities; advertising events using non-male-oriented language and with respect for diversity, etc.

More info on [Drac Magic](#)

– Gert Hermans