

# Cedric Igodt about WITCHFAIRY

## “Wand in hand”

A fairy trips across a carpet of flowers into the dark forest. What would a pink fairy have to do in a witch forest? Rosemary has had her fill of the sugary fairy life in the pink castle above the clouds and is irresistibly drawn to a wilder world. As Cowboy Junkies sang in a beautiful song: *“There are witches in the hills calling my name (...) Come dance in the moonbeams, ride the night wind...”* But Rosemary’s mother rules the witches’ castle and is not willing to let her daughter go.

In WITCHFAIRY, Belgian animation filmmaker Cedric Igodt tells the story in an efficient colour palette and without dialogues. Not an obvious choice for a fairy tale with different layers and nuances.

Cedric Igodt: I was impressed by designer Carll Cneut’s drawings. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted to take on the challenge of depicting the concept of ‘witch versus fairy’ without words, in powerful images. That visual of the fairy standing on top of a broom, wand in hand,

summed up the whole story for me. When I saw it, I realised: we can do this!

**Using no dialogue does help to reach an international audience.**

Igodt: And it’s paying off. WITCHFAIRY plays at festivals all over the world: in Australia, Los Angeles, Brazil, Montreal, Beijing... In Sudan, we present this story with all-female characters about the emancipation of a young girl at a festival with jury members from Saudi Arabia.

**Although there are no dialogues, there is a powerful soundtrack with voices grunting and giggling away.**

Igodt: For a moment I thought we wouldn’t need any actors... that could save us a lot of money! But of course it doesn’t work that way. A film without human voices will always feel somehow detached and emotionless. For the witches it was important that they radiated cheerfulness. The actresses understood this very well. We put them in the studio together and they screamed, squeaked and sobbed



like crazy, which adds a lot to the atmosphere.

**You profile the witches as cheerful characters.**

Igodt: We usually assume that fairies are happy and light-hearted while witches are nasty, awful creatures. In WITCHFAIRY things are the other way around. Rosemary’s mother is a strict fairy, but despite her prejudices she realises that witches are much more fun. She understands that her daughter chooses to be a witch and leaves her free choice.

**That does not go without a blow. Rosemary does not shy away from**

**conflict. Growling, she challenges her mother.**

Igodt: That’s the teenager in Rosemary. But she soon regrets it. Mother and daughter are equally stubborn; they know they went too far and repent. When mother sees her daughter in the witch forest, her heart melts immediately. They look into each other’s eyes; that’s all they need to fall into each other’s arms.

**That separation remains clear in the sets though: the pink fairy castle versus the dark witch forest.**

Igodt: When I started sending people visuals of the film, I initially always opted for pink stills; they seemed



more appealing. But actually only when arriving in the witch forest, you get truly absorbed by the film. So more and more often I neglect those pink visuals. WITCHFAIRY makes kids feel comfortable in the darkness of the witch forest. The poster brings both worlds together perfectly: a pink fairy in a dark forest. That contrast typifies this film.

**The scenes in which Rosemary walks into the woods over carpets of flowers are simply astonishing.**

Igodt: Those flowers feature strongly in Carll Cneut's drawings. Such a drawing is quite flat, but we thought it was such an iconic image that we stayed very close to the original illustrations. When mother arrives in the woods, we recreate this decor almost identically, in a cyan blue colour. Until Rosemary and her magic wand add another pink fairy hue to it.

**The witches deviate somewhat from the traditional image of the witch on a broomstick.**

Igodt: The book gave us no reference of what witches look like from head to toe; we only see heads and crooked noses. Building 3D models and making designs for so many different characters is a cumbersome job. So we started from the character of the



mother and by changing the colour, the nose, the cloak and other details, they had to look nice and funny. Like when they're all underwater, making crazy noises. Our reference was gremlins, which are also creepy, but we still like them.

**A kind of wood structure seems to be hidden under their faces.**

Igodt: In every 3D process you have a texturing and shading phase, where you decide on the texture and how the light falls in on it. We followed the designer's procedure, who always starts with a dark brown layer and adds lighter layers on top. This creat-

ed the effect of a doll, which helped determine the style of the animation.

**You have a background as a maker of 4D films for amusement parks and rollercoasters. What's left of that in WITCHFAIRY?**

Igodt: Very little, except for the short ride on the broomstick through the forest. 4D films often revolve around wind, splashing water, speed and action, while WITCHFAIRY is rather calm and slow. Though we did make a 3D copy of the film; Festivals can also book a 3D version with us.

**With one of your projects you participated in the Kids Kino Lab. How**

**was that?**

Igodt: For screenwriters, it's hugely helpful. As the participants get to know each other better, you will receive a lot of unvarnished feedback in a short period of time. I participated in a session as a screenwriter for another project and when I came home I completely rewrote the treatment in a few days. As a producer, networking was especially important; for example, I am now working on a few projects through my tutor in the Lab. ROSALY AND MR. MOON, the project with which we participated, is not really moving forward. In Belgium I got no for an answer from the children's public TV channel. Everyone at the Lab thought it was a great project, experienced people such as Burny Bos worked on it, but still I got stuck and will have to find new ways.

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Gert Hermans