

Phénomènes Surnaturels



Invisible Awakening

RESEARCH

Genesis and purpose of the project *Invisible Awakening*

What if it awoke “by itself”? ...

Both observing that animated objects on stage usually involve “visible” assistance, Marjan Kunaver and Violaine Fimbel – respectively mechanical/robotics engineer and puppeteer/magician – have been exploring fully concealed animation through which the object comes to life in an invisible way.

Noting that these creative tools originating from the stage world and later developed by the film world could be rejuvenated if they met the theater stage again, the duo has made it the focus of the research they call **Invisible Awakening**.

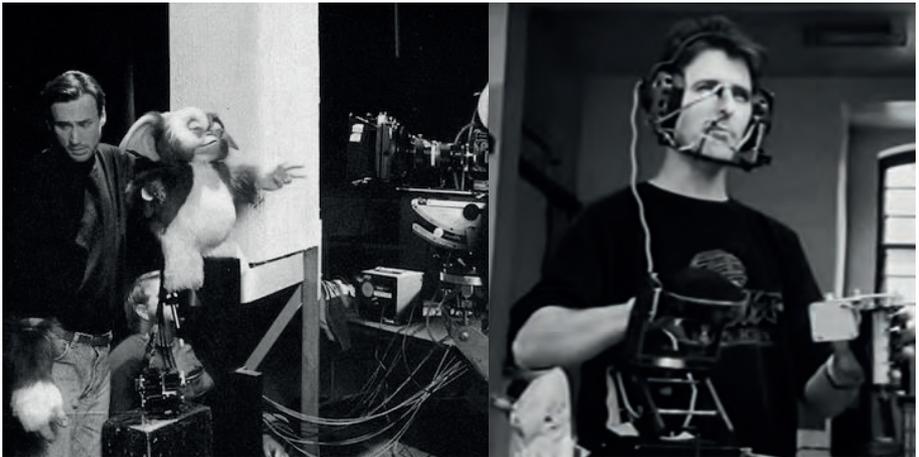
Drawing from the language of magic in which the puppet acts as the partner of the impossible, Violaine Fimbel and Marjan Kunaver intend to challenge perceptions, spark wonder and baffle the audience while preserving the magical and supernatural phenomenon at work when the audience faces an animated object whose source of animation is invisible.



Cie Yokai

Puppets, cinema and special effects

In their research they aim to interrogate the singular connection between puppetry, filmmaking and special effects. Violaine Fimbel comments: *“I’ve noticed that film has often borrowed things from puppetry, and that’s good, but it’s more and more rare to see the reverse happen. And yet Méliès, one of the pioneers of cinema who comes from magic and the theater, put to the screen the effects he had previously experimented with on stage. I became even more aware of that over my two-year training in New Magic at CNAC, and so my research will focus on delving into special effects that are much more commonly used in film than in the performing arts world.”*



On the set of Gremlins / Warner Bros

Big Henson 1 control

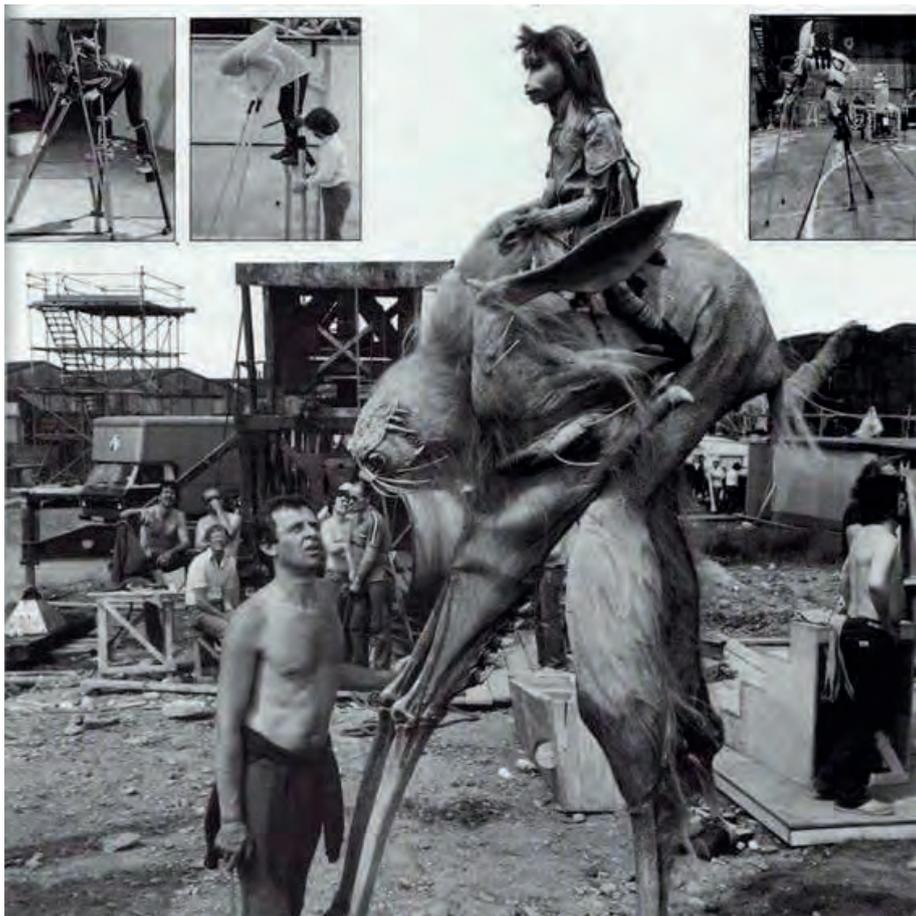
New linkages should be created in order to carry forward this exploration and find innovative solutions to the identified challenges. “Dead matter will trouble us only if the mind has lived in it”, Victor Hugo wrote in *The Laughing Man*. That sense of confusion only occurs when our perception is challenged, disrupted. The scope of *Invisible Awakening* lies in this zone of confusion.

How to conceal the operator completely so that the creature gives off an illusion of life?

This research must be conducted with consistent control over the quality and precision of that movement. A robot doesn't confuse the audience the same way an animatronic does – note the root of the word which contains “anima”, the soul inside it – because the primary requirement of an animatronic is to duplicate human, animal or vegetal movement identically. The mechanics give way to the closest and most realistic movement of what one wants to reproduce.



Harry Potter studio / Warner Bros



On the set of Dark Crystal / Jim Henson Company



Cie Yokai

An innovative and hybrid project

Invisible Awakening fits into an explorative innovation process aimed at testing out the team's insights and assumptions about the potential cross-pollinations between mediums and art forms, mostly film, special effects, new magic and contemporary puppetry.

This translates into developing the company's puppet FabLab, combining groundbreaking tools originating from film and new technologies and pairing those with existing puppetry and magic know-how to meet the specific needs of invisible animation.



Challenges and goals of the project Invisible Awakening

Following up on exploratory work on the shows **Possession** and **Gimme Shelter**, the company is now facing three challenges as it continues to explore animated objects and movement reproduction:



Cie Yokai

- **Making the animated elements highly reliable** : by resorting to a combination of digital tools such as modeling and 3D printing paired with robotics.
- **Achieving movement fluidity** : as our team researches the best enveloping material, the trained eye of choreographer Jérôme Brabant enables and helps along the accurate movement of the animated object. This dimension is supported by Le Manège-Scène nationale Reims and developed further thanks to our partnership with the Troyes-based company Compositex, which specializes in innovative textiles for state-of-the-art industries.
- **Making animated objects intuitive** : how to make technique unobtrusive on stage to performers who are not familiar with it? Builders and programmers aim to make these objects as simple and reliable as possible through innovations in ergonomics that considerably reduce the time needed for non-technicians to use them comfortably. Meeting this challenge enhances the quality of artistic practices.



Cie Yôkaï

Conception, dramaturgy and codirection of the research:

Violaine Fimbel is a puppeteer, magician and visual artist. She graduated from ESNAM (Ecole Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette) in 2014 and New Magic at CNAC (Centre National des Arts du Cirque) in 2016. She is the founder and Artistic Director of the Yôkaï Company.

Machine imaginator and codirection of the research:

Marjan Kunaver is a Slovenian artist and trained roboticist who has also been a puppeteer (builder, performer and operator) for over 20 years. In the early 2000s, he attended artistic trainings in mold making and animatronics at the Institut International de la Marionnette of Charleville-Mézières. He has designed autonomous devices and magical effects for the Yôkaï company since 2016.

Video artist:

Sylvain VALLAS A film director and graduate of ESRA (Rennes, France), Sylvain Vallas has worked across multiple art forms for eight years, collaborating with the professional teams of puppeteers, magicians, jugglers, musicians as well as fashion designers, photographers and web magazine writers. These activities, especially when combined, are a constant inspiration to him

Partners

Cultural partners

Le Manège – Scène nationale de Reims

Saint-Ex, digital culture center and its Fablab in Rheims

International Puppet Theater Festival of Charleville-Mézières

NAPP European program (Numeric Arts Puppetry Project) – spearheaded by 4 European partners well-established in the area of puppetry arts: Puppet Theater of Ljubljana, Slovenia, International Puppet Theater Festival of Charleville-Mézières, Romania’s Teatrul Tony Bulandra in Targoviste and the Puppetry Center of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in Belgium.

Film studio partners

Jim Henson’s Creature’s Shop - USA / New York City / Los Angeles

Atelier 69 Montreuil Studios FX (make-up, objects, assorted creatures, photos) – France

Academic partners

EiSINe Industrial and Digital Sciences School of Engineering, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne

ESRA (Film school), Rennes: cinema/television, sound and 2D/3D animation

Industrial and professional partners

COMPOSITEX company: a company specialized in innovative textile technology, Troyes, France.

Contact



Stage manager - Nicolas POIX - nicolaspoix@gmail.com - +33 (0)7 83 19 32 06

Touring and production management - Julie LE CORRE - jlc.yokai@gmail.com
+33 (0)6 11 21 20 91



Artistic Direction - Violaine FIMBEL - compagnieyokai@gmail.com