

Otonashi

Directed by Martin Gerigk

"A philosophical and sensorial exploration of the internal mechanics and movements of our existence and essence."

Country: Germany/Japan

Year of production: 2021

Genre: Experimental, Animat.



Synopsis

The idea and concept of the short experimental animation "Otonashi" directed by Martin Gerigk is revolving around the famous Heart Sutra, Hannya Shingyo and its philosophical principles. As the sutra focuses on the idea of emptiness and compassion, the short follows the same esoteric lines using stylised animation, precise music inviting everyone into a reflective journey of perception where all the senses are activated but summoned to challenge the traditional, the know, the palpable, the logical.

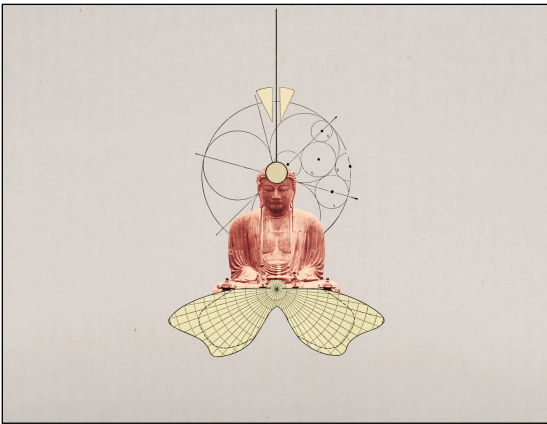
Rating: Very Good

Idea

The idea surrounding this explosion of non conventionality emerges from the concept of emptiness itself, explored and pondered about in the Heart Sutra. With minimalistic animation using strong and suggestive geometrical shapes, the short film focuses on creating a sensorial journey into the crazy “Perfection of Wisdom” promised by one of the most famous and most controversial of sutras.

Rating: Very Good

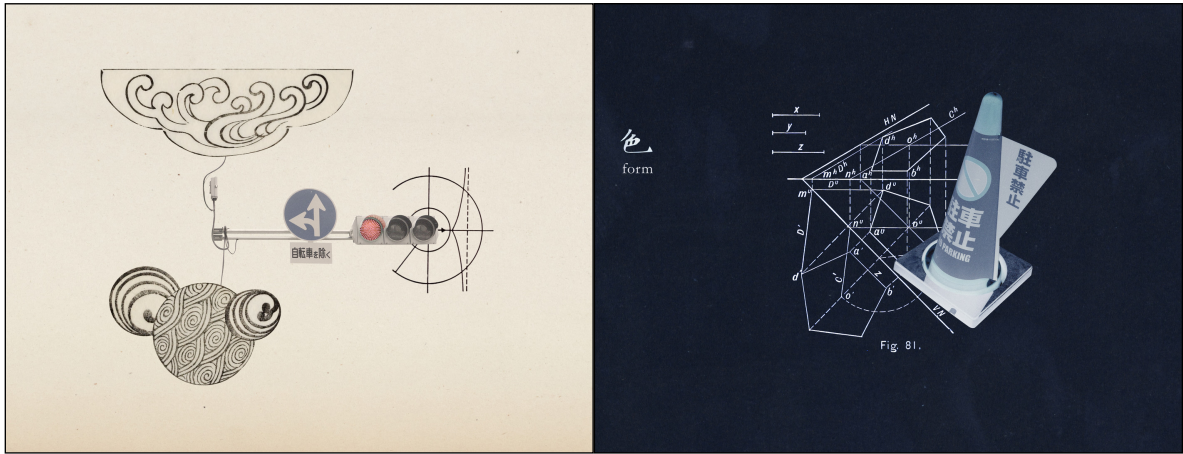
Script



Arguably there is no narrative thread present in the short “Otonashi”. However the ingenious ability to transform an extremely abstract and esoteric concept and transpose it into something mesmerising and introspective as well as atmospheric and engaging, can not be overlooked. The smooth and organic way in which the rational, the emotional, the scientific, the symbolic are all presented as broken and apparently unconnected but linked structures of a higher meaning and

purpose, contours a wonderful direction in which narration is irrelevant, even more impractical since just as explored in the Heart Sutra, Emptiness is considered the ultimate state of enlightenment, a state where the detachment from everything and anything frees us from the good or the bad from the past, present and future, from life or death.

Rating: Very Good



Cinematography & Editing

Acting

Created with great care and a highly aesthetic and precise style, the combination of moving elements in the animated collages, bring a distinctive and poignant feel to the visual side of this atypical short film. It is a challenge not to be enthralled by the virtuosity and patience invested in the craft of each shot.

The editing seems effortless as it is completely tuned to unique music and flow of the animation. The world of concepts and unattainable philosophies becomes accessible as a calming experience with sprinkles of symbolism, geometry, colour and sound.

N/A

Rating: Very Good

Rating:

Sets

N/A

Rating:

Music

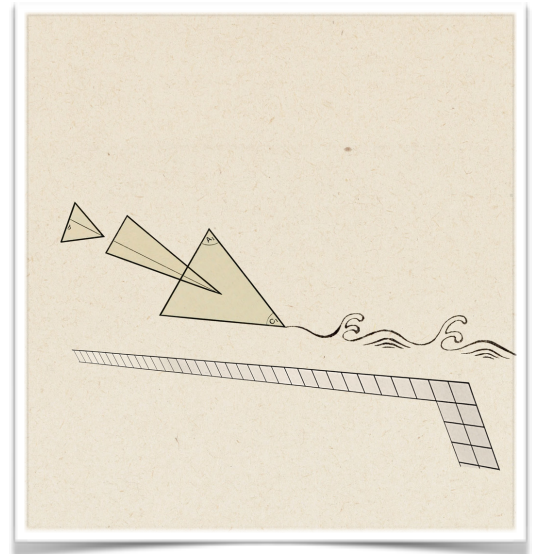
With a simple but highly elaborate combination of just two instruments, the music utilised throughout the animation, is an absolute delight to experience and catapults the viewer to immerse himself/herself into the realm of the unexplored and undiscovered. By achieving such a symbiotic relationship between the visual and the auditive side "Otonashi" immerses itself into the beautiful and the calm, into the mundane and the extraordinary, into the traditional and uncusomary. The unique violin sound, with its technically precise and special tune invites the viewer into a differently paced world, where serenity comes naturally and unattached. Contrasting the sharp and tranquil sound of the violin, the percussion comes to offer a more solemn and impressive tune, one focusing on the grounded elements of life and our surrounding as well as creating a hint of dynamism and variation.

Rating: Excellent

Film Ending/Array of Meanings

There is pure serenity pouring from every little moment of this indulging animation. The simple and beautifully constructed shots along with the harmonised music bring a rare type of challenge for the viewers. A challenge befitting of the "Heart Sutra" where the essence of the sensorial journey focuses on the negation of conventional understanding and anticipations and customary concepts. As this short continues to use symbolism and visually suggestive collages to provoke the mind and the senses, its mesmerising simplicity draws and incite at a mystifying level.

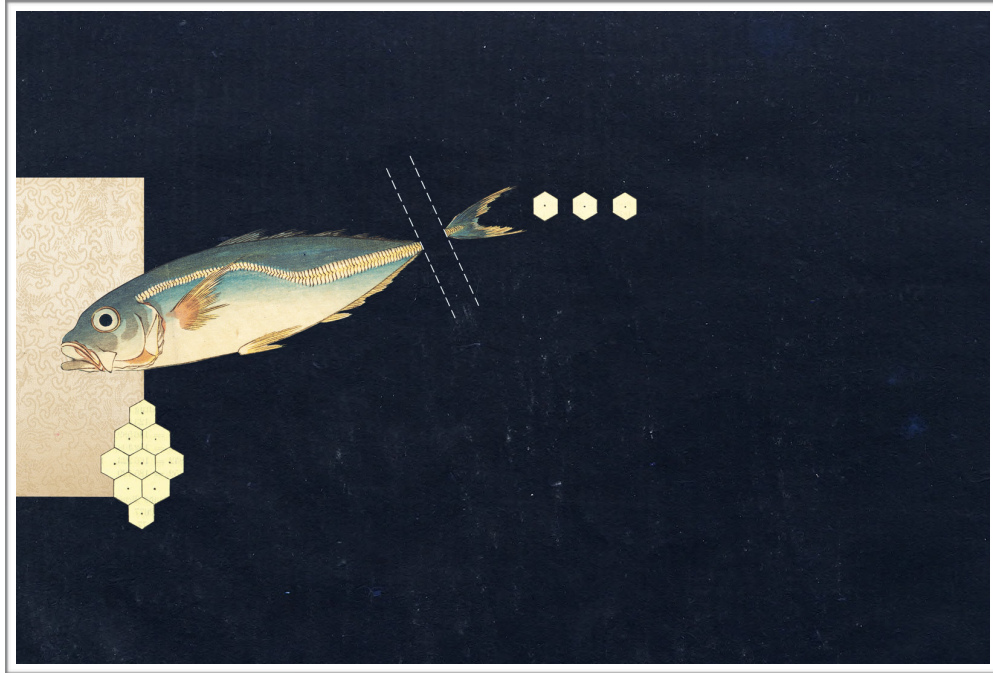
Rating: Very Good



Directing & Director's Vision

The wondrous and profound vision of Director Martin Gerigk is, to say the least, nonconformist. The undisturbed thirst for acumen and comprehension is deeply anchored in the wisdom found in both the visual and the musical. Just like the Heart Sutra which deconstructs, and demolishes all our usual conceptual frameworks, all our rigid ideas, along with our belief systems, and our reference points, including any with regard to our spiritual path, so does "Otonashi" mark on a journey of creating a space where rules and boundaries are being elevated from their customary route into the unpredictable and liberating feeling and experience of being detached.

Rating: Very good



Final Conclusions

“Otonashi” directed by Martin Gerigk offers a refreshing and exhilarating insight into the powerful connection that we can cultivate in within ourselves when being introduced to strong philosophical notions such as the Heart Sutra and ultimately when we ponder about life, what is purposeful and the unanswered questions of our existence. This little short animation does so on a very fundamental level, not just in terms of thinking and concepts, but also in terms of our perception, how we see the world, how we hear, how we smell, taste, touch, how we regard and emotionally react to ourselves and others as well as our link with the universe and what lies beyond. What grants “Otonashi” its wise power and accomplished vision is the bravery with which it explores the abstract and the way it defies the everything and the nothing in both the idea it chose to explore as well as the means and artistic elements employed.



Reviewed by Ioana Dorofte