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Present



APPROVED FOR ADOPTION

An animated true story

By Jung and Laurent Boileau

71 minutes - 35 mm – DCP - HD

Produced by: Mosaïque Films – Artemis Productions – France 3 Cinéma

French Distribution: Gebeka Films

Benelux Distribution: Cinéart

Audience Award and Unicef Award at Annecy Animation Festival 2012

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SYNOPSIS

Jung. Cartoonist. 42 years old according to his civil status, Jung prefers to place his birth at the age of 5, when a policeman found him wandering alone in the streets of Seoul. He is one of those 200 000 adopted Koreans spread around the world.

Jung decided to return for the first time in South Korea, in order to breathe the air of his home country, tread the land of his ancestors, and maybe find traces of his biological mother. This trip of reconciliation with his roots and with himself leads our character to recall – in animation – the child he once was and the winding path that made him grow up.

APPROVED FOR ADOPTION is a very original animation film for an original topic. The characters were developed and created in 3D, the landscapes and decorations are in 2D and the drawings are originally made by Jung. The film deals with adoption issues with tenderness and humor.



JUNG, co-director & drawer



Jung was born on December 2nd, 1965 in Seoul, in South Korea. Adopted by a Belgian family in 1971, he adopts the name of Jung Henin. He follows studies of Traditional Humanities (Latin and Mathematics) at the Athénée Royal de Rixensart, before attending one year, in 1985, the Saint-Luc workshop of Brussels.

He then studies at the academy of the Art schools of Brussels, in Illustration section. In parallel, he makes a short passage in the animated cartoon, in Cambre. It is in 1987 that his career takes a decisive turn, when he meets Marc Michetz, who presents him to the Spirou magazine. That enables him to illustrate some short articles in Spirou and Tintin. He then works a few months in the workshop of Yslaïre and Darasse, and illustrates also the covers of Belgian Business Magazine.

In 1991, Jung publishes the first of the four volumes of Yasuda, at Hélyode-Lefranc. The finality of his drawings is for him to show emotions, feelings, through characters quite present, alive. In 1997, in collaboration with Martin Ryelandt, he directs *Young girl and the Wind*, with the Delcourt editions. The Asian universe of this series of heroic-fantasy is a return to his Korean origins, and the fantastic enables him to reinforce the evocative side of his drawing, in particular for the hero: Wind.

In 2001 he publishes with Jee-Yun Kwaidan (3 volumes) with the Delcourt editions, a new series which strikes by the beauty of the direct colors and the subtle and refined poetry which emanates from this Japanese tale.

In 2006, always in collaboration with Jee-Yun, he publishes *Okiya*, a Japanese erotic tale. He has just published in the editions Delcourt *Kyoteru* a history on the world of the ninja children and *Skin color: honey*, an autobiographical account in black and white for the editions Soleil.

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Jung- Director's note - 15th of March 2012 The Same Cavern...

I make comics book since twenty years now, I tirelessly tackles the same themes, namely, uprooting, abandonment, identity, Asia, siblings ... My will to make drawings was born with the desire to handle through the filter of fiction all those themes close to me. One day, I decided not to play hide and seek with myself and started *Couleur de peau: Miel (Approved for Adoption)*, my autobiography on a comic book...

It was important for me to talk about adoption and especially the theme of international Korean adoption. How I have experienced abandonment, the denial of my Korean origins, the self-destruction, my connection to another culture in the Far East, Japan, a country I could be proud of and the historical enemy of South Korea. Beyond those issues, there were also the biological and adoptive mothers and the integration with my new siblings, accepting my diversity and the rebuilding of myself.

I regularly receive very touching letters from readers thanking me for doing this book, but also from adoptive parents who understood their children better than. A doctor even told me he would use my comic book.

I didn't expect such a feedback from readers. Cinema is another medium, without a doubt more compelling than the comic because it's a team effort. However, I'm not alone in front of my drawing sheet anymore. I have to deal with third parties: technicians, producers, over 150 people in total ... and I have to ensure that both groups are holding up in the right direction. Finally, the course has been held and the baby is beautiful, it is really wonderful! I do not regret having temporarily exchange my pen and my brushes with a camera.

The tools are different but it's always the same story; I'm still on my favorite field, exploring the same cave that is the search for identity that never ends, which is constantly in development, in progress.

The film *Approved for Adoption* sometimes takes us further than my graphic novel ... The movement; the voices, the sound effects, the music and the narration contribute to give a strong emotional charge. This film was conceived in compliance with the codes of storytelling in cinema, but the autobiographical dimension of this adventure led us to shake certain habits and find our own path, our own identity. The mixture between real footage, 3D animation, 2D drawings and fixed hybrid makes of this film a singular object. This is the background that determined the form.

The material is real and it was difficult to completely fix things on a storyboard. Everything remained in motion, until the end. A film, whose main subject is the search for identity, could not be quite like the others. His "manufacture" either...

However, the final object is for everyone and its universality should touch people's heart...

Jung

Questions and answers – Jung – March 2012

Looking for the mother

As a teenager, I was attracted to mature women or mother's figure. Looking for my identity and in the same time, looking for my biologic mother. My adoptive mother wasn't so gentle, having had a very strict childhood herself. When I talk about it with my sister Coralie, she says she was pretty harsh with her as well and that she was strict with all her children in the end. However as an adopted kid, I was feeling differently, more intensely I guess. I came in this family in need for a lot of affection. Adoptee's problem is that they tend to victimize themselves and when you're young, you don't even realize it.

Drawing as a therapy

I could have play music or write novels. I chose comic books because the cartoon's world was for me an easy expression way: you just needed a sheet of paper and a pen. It feels right for me to draw and tell stories but not to draw only. I am naturally gifted for drawing and I learned it along the way as I had a story to tell...When I was fifteen, I discovered the comic series Jonathan by Cosey. This comic struck me by its emotional power. It's also the story of an identity quest: An amnesic Swiss finding himself in Tibet looking for his past. It opened new perspectives for me at a time where I wasn't feeling well. I built myself a drawing workshop in a stall, in the garden, and spent all summer in there. For 60 days, I was truly happy. Drawing allowed me to have an imaginary world and to create another life for myself. I created a love story with my biological mother and drawing was a therapy then.

Korean's abandoned

Working on my graphic novel *Couleur de peau: Miel*, I read a lot. I even tried to understand why so many children were abandoned from Korea. As a kid, I didn't understand this. It's one of the reasons why I blamed my birth country. It's cultural. Separation is part of Korean's history. North and South Korea of course but before, there was the Japanese occupation for three decades. Korean people went through a lot. Families still live in pain from the separation.

Graphic novel

I always thought that I had to tell my story; a comic book would allow me to stand back and to make it less alarming. I wanted to avoid sordid realism which is part of many biographies. The best way to embrace my story and introduce it to the reader was using irony. From this came the dialog with the kid I once was. This gap was very important to me as it didn't prevent emotion to get in there. Comics allow this mix of genres.

From a comic book to the screen

First, Laurent Boileau wanted to make a documentary about my return to Korea. We didn't speak about cinema at the time but TV. We met several times and the idea of the big screen came up. The point wasn't to stick to the graphic style exactly as it was difficult to have two reading levels in a motion picture so we went for a literal adaptation instead. We had to make a narrative choice: going into humor and irony or sticking with the facts exclusively. The voice-over maintains this gap however we couldn't abuse from it as it would have been

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ridicule.

An organic process

I cannot separate the book and the film. It's the same story and also the continuity. The film is the sequel of my two books and I am actually preparing a third comic and the circle will be complete. With cinema, the final object is curious, out there and has its own identity. Very often, we like or we dislike an adaptation from a comic book, here I think there is a total different artistic perspective, more radical.

A hybrid animation story

Technique served the story. We didn't start thinking about using the super 8 family archives and 3D or 2D animation combines to real footage to make a hybrid. Each element of the film became natural and normal and was at some point the best medium to tell the story. 3D was just a try at first and France Television helped us to shoot a pilot and launch the wider project. They offered us to use their graphic studio in Nancy, directed by Jean-Luc Desmond, to shoot the trailer. Jean-Luc mentioned the 3D creation with a 2D aspect on screen. The result convinced us even if it was a technical challenge. First I really needed to adapt my style to the technique. Then, the 2D aspect on screen from 3D creation can be uncomfortable to look at. Fortunately, we had a team which worked well on the 2D aspect, close to my drawing style. What mattered to me was the acting and that's what I was looking at for every sequence I received. The characters needed to be credible. For the dream-like scenes however, I wanted 2D animation for little Jung's fantasies, who used drawing to escape.

The return to Korea

I was scared to go back to Korea. In hindsight, I could have done it alone first. When we left, we expected a lot because the project was based from it. We scripted a couple of scenes, but I am not a comedian. In fact, nothing much happened. I wasn't surprised: it was impossible to get a real introspection with twenty persons around me. Finally, a few shots are left in the film. Clearly, I think if I went back alone, I would have had the same feeling. You think about going back and finding your own self. Really the question I was asking myself was about the Korean perception of me. A distance grew between us. I don't speak Korean anymore. I don't know the Korean culture. I went back realizing that that the grass wasn't greener over there.

The voice-over

I spent a long time writing the voice-over. For the animated part, that was clear. But linking the return to Korea to the animation was a challenge. The whole film was shaped by the right voice-over and I spent many sleepless nights writing and thinking about it. Finally, my wife gave me the key. She told me she still saw me like a little boy; living in his imaginary world and seeking for his mother. It came back to the graphic universe and that became the wire.

Family's reaction

In my books, my comments were harsh – with more bitterness than in the film. My family handled them well. My mum told one of my sisters that I was right about writing those books. The comic books are subjective but I respect the facts always. I invented nothing and none of my family members protested. We actually shot the last scene – the drawer one – at my mother's. We even ended the film on her.

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Laurent Boileau, co-director

Laurent Boileau, 43 years, worked for 10 years as chief operator and then as chief editor on many documentaries (France 2, France 3, France 5, Canal +, planet ...). In 1999, he started directing. He participated in the series Issues in Education, produced by Mosaic Films for France 5. In 2002 and 2003, he directed a college like no other planet for future on an innovative college in Lyon.



His passion for comics and more generally on the graphic arts led him to make several films about the 9th art: Artisans of the imagination (France 3, 2004), Spirou, a renaissance (TLM, 2004), Franquin Gaston and company (France 5, RTBF, 2005), the Horses of paper (Equidia, 2006), Sokal, the art of fine (France 3, 2007), Poland Marzi (TV Rennes 35, 2009).

On the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, he developed an animated series for RTBF and curiosphere.tv (also distributed at the Festival de Pessac). Alongside his work as a director, he has chronicled the outputs of BD on the news site actuabd.com and animated comics site of France Televisions.

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Laurent Boileau- Director's note - March 2012
AN UPROOTED MAN

As great reader of comics and graphic novels, I knew Jung's Asian style work only. In November 2007, I fell in love with *Approved for Adoption*. With an offbeat look and a tone often ironic, Jung reads his own life and wonders about his past, his roots and his adopted status. The adoption refers to many complex concepts: identity, uprooting families, absence, abandonment, destiny difference. The broken thread of life must be rebuilt, and to achieve this, we must draw energy deep within oneself. Jung took a long time before to tell about himself. It is not easy to take a distance with a story that marks the mind as much, sometimes the flesh.

Our meeting has naturally resulted in a common desire: to be accompanied each other to discuss beyond the problems inherent in the adoption, the acceptance of the self and the difference.

One of the challenges of scriptwriting adaptation was to be based on Jung's personal story without betraying it but trying to make it more universal. Has occurred to expand the personality of each family member and to develop the nature of relations between them. From a dramaturgical point of view, adoption is a disturbing element so interesting. New links are developed between children and between parents and children. Everyone's place is in question, a new balance must be found. Blended families are experiencing the same problem.

I also wanted the film is not confined to a simple glance at a history of child and adolescent. The adopted status does not abandoning to the gates of the adult world. So I suggested to

Jung to go further than his graphic novel and to include in the film a reflection on what he was going to live by returning for the first time in Korea and what he saw on today.

The film reveals the story of an uprooted man seeking to end the sterile struggle of rejection of his origins. Jung's personal story also refers to the collective history of a people divided, separated by a dividing line since 1953. Of its scale, international Korean adoption is a strange and unique phenomenon in the world.

Carried on by the person of Jung, the film goes beyond the mere personal investigation; the search for his biological family is proving futile. He reveals the amazing human ability to survive, adapt, create and renew itself.

Animations (2D and 3D), drawings, live action, historical records and family ... *Approved for adoption* mixes up genres. Is it a fiction? An animated film? An animated documentary? An autobiographical film for sure. A story that mirror us back inexorably to our own history, our own quests...

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INTERVIEW WITH LAURENT BOILEAU- March 2012

Under what circumstances did you discover Jung's story?

As columnist for Actuabd.com, I also had the opportunity to conduct interviews with about 80 cartoonists for the website of France 3 TV. I read about three hundred comic books in a year. In 2007, among them, it was love at first sight for *Approved for Adoption*. This autobiographical story caught my attention by its content and how Jung recounted his journey, with irony and hindsight. At the end of his book he stated that he would return for the first time in Korea. By doing some research on Jung, I discovered he had more than forty years. I thought it was probably not innocent if it was never returned to his homeland. I contacted him via his publisher Quadrants, in order to propose to make a film about his story.

Did you have a clear idea of what it would look on film?

No, I did not know exactly what I wanted to do. We met regularly for six months, during which Jung drew the second volume of *Approved for Adoption*. Gradually, the idea to mix live action and animation came. Thus was born also the idea of a formal film. We could have opted for an adaptation in real images of the comic, as it happened, for example, for *Quartier Loin* by Sam Garbaski, on a book of Jiro Taniguchi. But the animation was imposed for three reasons. One: the design is the pattern of expression of Jung. Since the story is autobiographical, it was sticking to his artistic language. Two: I had the feeling that the movie had emphasized the subjective dimension of history. This is a true story, regarding a family that still exists, his parents are still alive. But this is the version of the facts reported by Jung. With drawing and animation, we assumed that subjectivity. Reason number three: in his albums, Jung repeatedly uses the dreamlike or symbolism. The animation allowed us to fulfill his visual choices; a transposition in real images would probably distort.

Why did you opt for the 3D animation with a 2D rendering?

Not being an animation specialist, my fear was that by comparing actual images and animated sequences, we get an effect somewhat artificial or even two movies in one. Meanwhile, Jung was a little suspicious: his background as an author of comic books was more naturally to 2D. I especially wanted to find a technique that serves the story. 3D seemed to me to integrate better with the real Jung. When Jung saw the results of the animation, he found the soul of his character. We therefore adopted this technology, even if it has changed enormously during the production. 2D rendering of 3D animation move us closer to Jung and strengthens the atypical side that makes one of the strong identities of the film.

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However, you mix this 3D technology with other animation techniques, more traditional, such 2D sketches.

We actually referred to other techniques, because this story combines several narrative layers. There is for example the story at first degree of Jung' memories, on which are grafted dream sequences or internal reflections of the character. To avoid losing the audience, the use of different styles has emerged. This also allowed us to return to what is the essence of the story of Jung that was born on comic panels, and remember the importance of drawing in his personal evolution. This link seemed to us fundamental.

Another contribution of the film from the comic, which is made with wash drawing, is the color. How did you opt for this range of ocher that dominates the screen?

Since the film was in its hybrid form, I had very early the idea of having a fairly radical choice of colors and a limited palette (both in real images in the animation) referring to the omnipresent duality in the film: adoptive mother and biological mother, Belgium and Korea, etc. for adults and children. . We were inspired by the range of color covers of two albums of Jung. We kept this dominant ocher, which is also the color of honey, and we face sequences in blue-gray tone which also refers to the wash draw of the original comic. The warm ocher accompanies the "light" happy sequences, when the blue-gray are used for the passages of tension, or darkest nightmare, as the sequence of suicides



What are the personal items you found in the history of Jung?

The questioning of the relationship you can have in a stepfamily between children who are like brothers and sisters but not brothers and sisters in blood. This sent me back to my own experience. Moreover, the uprooting is a theme that has always interested me. I had already approached this topic in my documentary *The Poland of Marzi*. Marzena Sowa, who is also the author of an autobiographical comic book where she describes her childhood in communist Poland, during the 80', until the fall of the Berlin Wall. He fantasized about France, then she came here and now she cannot feel longer completely Polish, but not wholly French or Belgian. Jung also felt ambivalence of identity: he doesn't feel himself totally a Belgian, and in Korea, he doesn't manage to feel himself totally Korean.



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PRODUCTION DETAILS



Authors:
Jung and Laurent Boileau

Directors:
Jung and Laurent Boileau

Length:
74'

Shooting format:
16/9

Shooting support:
HD red one
Blow up in 35 mm

Shooting places:
South Korea (30 days)

Animation production:
Dreamwall studio (in Belgium)
Videographic Center of France Television
(France)
Gazato Films (Angoulême)

Estimated Budget: 4671 827 euros

Production:
Mosaique Films, Thomas Schmitt

Coproduction Belgium: Artémis
Productions, Patrick Quinet

Coproduction South Korea: Panda Media

Coproduction France: France 3 cinéma

French Distribution 06/06/12: Gébéka Films

Benelux Distribution: Cinéart

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