



LE TABLEAU (THE PAINTING) is the July, 2014 LVCA dvd donation to the Ligonier Valley Library of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Below is Kino Ken's review of that dvd film.

France 2011, 2012 color 78 minutes feature animation fantasy in French with English subtitles BE-Films / Blue Spirit Studio / Sinématik / France 3 Cinema / Rezo Productions / RTBF (Belgian Television) / France Télévisions / Canal + / Ciné + / Eurimages / CNC / Procirep & Angoa / The Poiteau-Charentes Region / Pole Image Magelis / Charente Department / G Kids
Producers: Armelle Glorennec, Eric Jacquot, Christophe Louis, Adrian Politowski, Gilles Waterkyn, Arlette Zylenberg

12 of a possible 20 points

*** of a possible *****

Key: *indicates outstanding technical achievement or performance

Points

- Film Director: Jean-Francois Laguionie
- 0 Film Editor: Emmanuel de Miranda
- 1 Camera: Emmanuel de Miranda
- 1 Lighting
- 2 Animation: Lionel Chauvin (Director of Animation / Layout), Guido Canali, Agnes Chevrau, Koen De Koninck, Oskar De Ryckers, Joan Delmont, Thomas Enjalbert, Jerome Ernoult, Nicolas Fong, Dominique Gantois, Benoit Garnier, Matthieu Grasset, Joachim Henrard, Hilere (Animation Supervisor), Denis Huneau, Marie Moet
- 0 Original Screenplay: Anik Leray, Jean-Francois Laguionie

- 2 Music: Pascal Le Pennec
- 2 Art Director: Jean Palenstijn*
- Graphic Designers: Jean-Francois Laguionie*, Jean Palenstijn*, Julien Bisayo*, Remi Chayé*
- 1 Sound: Piste Rouge Sound Designers: Sebastien Marquilly, Alexandre Fleurant, Julien Mizac
- Supervising Sound Editor: Alexandre Fleurant
- 1 Voices Cast: Jessica Monceau / Kamali Minter (Lola, the narrator), Julien Bouanich / Colin De Paula (Gom, a Sketchie), Chloe Berthier / Eden Riegel (Claire, Ramo's lover, a Halfie), Adrien Larmande / Michael Sinterniklaas (Ramo, Claire's lover, an Alldunn), J. B. Blanc (The Painter / Venice Painter), Steve Blum (Self Portrait), Marc Thompson (The Great Chandelier), Christopher Kromer (Gray Morgen), Vinnie Penna (Quill), Magali Rosenzweig (Orange de Mars), Colleen O'Shaugnessy (Harlequin), Thomas Sagols / Spike Spencer (Magenta, drum major boy), Sam Riegel (Silhouette), Thierry Jahn (Plume, a charcoal sketch), Céline Ronté (Garance), Elizabeth McGlynn (Florence), others
- 2 Creativity
- 12 total points

In director Jean-Francois Laguionie's LE TABLEAU (THE PAINTING) a world of animated characters is subdivided into three classes. Alldunns are fully painted individuals. Ramo, The Great Chandelier and Gray Morgen are principal representatives of this affluent, aristocratic group. Below them is the Halfies, who have not been entirely finished by their creator. Narrator girl Lola and older, melancholy Claire belong to that subordinate class, permitted to reside in outlying gardens, but not allowed entry to the Alldunn's castle. At bottom of the social ladder are Sketchies, personalities only outlined. Their colorless forms wander furtively throughout the perceived world, being allowed freedom only to subsist as best they can in wild, uncultivated forest bordering garden acreage. Gom and Quill come from this despised, impoverished, persecuted society of pariahs.

Claire and Ramo meet clandestinely as lovers in gardens, brought together by romantic Lola, a younger girl searching for adventure beyond permitted territory. The fond couple wish to marry. However, their union is opposed by The Great Chandelier, a tyrannical Alldunn who has achieved dominance over his peers by promoting their selfish prejudices against all who look different. Chandelier's sidekick and chief toady is Gray Morgen, a bland bureaucrat with no special ideology or aspirations of his own.

When Ramo challenges Chandelier's elitist philosophy, he is mocked by that overlord, who cynically denies the painter who created and subsequently abandoned them will ever return. This nihilistic credo is generally accepted by lords and ladies of Alldunn's castle, for it permits them to dominate everyone else. A feckless Sketchie discovered flitting about the grand ballroom is captured by guards, then savagely reduced to a heap of squiggles while blasé Alldunn spectators comment on how fitting that punishment is for interloping inferiors. Overtones of pre-revolutionary France are strongly evident in this scene.

Ramo, disgusted and threatened with banishment or captivity, dashes off to find solace with equally spurned Claire. The remnants of apprehended trespasser Sketchie are pitched down into the gardens, where grieving comrade Gom eventually locates them. After a brief unsuccessful attempt to reconstruct his boyish companion, Gom withdraws into shrubbery, carrying the victim of Alldunn rancor along to what he hopes will be safe haven.

Pursued by security minions of Chandelier, Ramo is rescued by a sympathetic Lola, who foresightedly happens to have a boat available for immediate transport. Gom and his load appear just as the other two are about to depart. Lola prevails upon Ramo to accept additional passengers, a situation both Sketchie and Alldunn find disgusting. Nonetheless, with hunters pressing hard, the quartet moves away from land.

Soon an overwhelmingly strong current carries them irresistibly into the mouth of a cave where they anticipate becoming food for carnivorous plants. Instead, after a nearly fatal transit of rapids and waterfall, fugitives are tossed out into an alien landscape. They decide to try cooperatively searching for a trail through the wilderness. Hopefully, while doing so the mystery of painter absence can also be solved.

Claire, informed that Ramo has disappeared into the wilds, travels overland until she reaches that treacherous cave which reportedly swallowed her beau. She, too, is admitted and inspected by flowers, one of which appears to have more than just general curiosity. In a dream with sensual, erotic overtones, Claire appears to be bathed and fondled by a plant with one enormous eyeball, perhaps a tribute to the surrealism of Salvador Dali. Coming out of this rapture, she resumes searching for Ramo, seemingly refreshed for upcoming ordeals.

Now a series of encounters with other images from unfamiliar paintings leads questing refugees in and out of studio and storeroom chambers once home to their inventor. Pulling away masking curtains reveals war scene, self-portrait, odalisque, carnival in Venice --- assorted productions from a career devoted to art. Apparently never satisfied, their originator has always left them behind, souvenirs of past obsessions no longer especially relevant or compelling.

Lola, fixated on journeying to the sea, detaches herself from the rest, more intensely probing motivation and will of creator, though for the most part only suggestive inferences rather than testimony is made available to her.

What could have yielded a fascinating inquiry into creative processes and goals is allowed to degenerate into an unconvincing spectacle of tormented sweethearts fettered by misogynistic Chandelier and his henchman. The darkly-garbed caricatured Philistine orders enslavement of Halfies. They are required to construct a stage upon which the final act of Ramo and Claire's outlawed passion will be publicly enacted. Transgressing victims will be granted the privilege of dying together in order to provide cautionary entertainment to respectable society. A miraculous preservation at the last second by newly liberated allies intervenes, keeping the fated duo from perishing. Society is reinvented as each member, except villainous despot Chandelier, is given opportunity to refashion itself according to personal taste using paint tubes collected by wandering counterparts.

The moral appears to be that happiness is comprised of simply being yourself and living solely in the moment. Do not research your past, for there you will find only disappointment. Worry not about the future, for it cannot be changed or circumvented. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you die.

Except for Lola, who is chasing something more transcendental and basic, seeking sensory novelty and primal cause. She alone moves beyond limitations of studio walls, mixing with three-dimensional humans and natural environment, ever hopeful of encountering at last the endlessness of ocean waves. For her, a different conclusion is in store, one merely hinted at on screen. Viewers must content themselves with a Magritte-like excursion into repetitive enlargements, worlds contained within worlds, imagination unbounded, an ending which is simultaneously a beginning.

Enhanced by Pascal Le Pennec's lush, gently plaintive orchestral score and parodies of famous paintings by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Amadeo Modigliani, to name just a few, LE TABLEAU shimmers with vibrant colors, enticing to eye, recalling visits to art galleries ornamented with impressionist and modern masterpieces. It's a recapitulating tribute to masters of twentieth-century European visual art, a reminder of how they have enriched humanity.

Jean Palenstijn's exquisite designs, elaborated in partnership with Languionie's own fabrications, entice onlookers at every step of journeys depicted. Sadly, a significant portion of their impact is reduced by editing which alternately overextends and rushes scenes, leaving what should be a continuously flowing, unified plot in discrete, isolated shambles, a series of incomplete sketches with only tenuous connection to each other. Likewise, Anik Leray and Jean-François Laguionie's screenplay fails to locate a central theme, sliding off into tangents any one of which could by itself constitute a full story. The process by which Chandelier obtains power is never so much as outlined, nor is the capitulation of high society to levelling principles credibly explained. Philosophical argument is not the strong suit of this writing team.

Lighting is rather too weak, sometimes masking desirable details of backgrounds. While greater clarity might vitiate somewhat the gauzy layering of impressionism, it would certainly enhance viewer comprehension of place and time, neither of which is strongly communicated in individual scenes. Time duration is particularly nebulous, though inept editing shares responsibility for this deficiency.

Sound is not always conducive to understanding, with portions of dialogue being lost due to inadequate recording pickup. Sound effects are handled better,

more competently preserved and registered. Voices throughout are distinctive, with appropriate shadings of tone and stressings.

Due to arty nudity, inferred seduction, persistent stalkings by the Grim Reaper and scenes of slashing disfigurement, LE TABLEAU cannot be recommended for audiences under the age of eighteen. For anyone older, it's a treasury with generally delightful outpourings of chromaticism and moody melodic fragments. This splendid animation is essential viewing for enthusiasts of early Twentieth-Century European painting.

Special features of the G Kids dvd include a 33-minute informative "Making of" featurette, a 9 ½ minute gloriously radiant concept art sideshow, subtitles, and a two minute U.S. trailer.