

From Silver to Silicon

Toy Story

From Mercury to the M4 Corridor, from the Industrial Magic of digital animation to endless CD-Rom Multimedia releases, the next wave of the cyber-surf washes in. Here are two pieces pondering two very different exemplars of the digitalis.

TOO MUCH IS NEVER ENOUGH

Stepping off the CD-Rom review platform, Declan Sheehan weaves a poetic response to immersion in Artec's recent 'From Silver to Silicon', a multi-media CD-Rom experiment on the changing condition of the photograph.

Full of stuff, it's strange to see it all, old bits, pieces, stuff, things, there's a frisson as the hands delve into the box, but behind it, or ahead, or aware of an ahead, wind forward, there's every dread, and so a hope, of an anticlimax, there won't be all, there never is, so there's that sense, because that's how life has been, and is, and will continue to be, ahead, forward, forever, forever and ever, amen, as again, once more, years later, is now believed, but here in the past, where it is, these things, what are there, from years behind, it's a time of years behind, there are paper objects, zines, magazines, brochures, catalogues, and they, more so now than at the time itself in question, hold more now, there's a, use the word, more than one in fact, there are ideologies, hidden ideologies even there, even then, but there's a strain between, amidst them, so, for the sense of argument, to capture the whole feeling in one, because that was it, there was a search amongst the many for the one, there's a single ideology, and it's easier to see it now, because then, that was a word that couldn't be used, funny, because it's natural, at the time, back a decade, in the passage of the years in a life, and the passage of years as is the case for many was made a passage of distance, of physical distance, the old story, away from, away from, away from home, and the two are often one, through the passage of distance to a passage of mind, but was there too much, but this is too much, it's time to be clearer, there were several small paper books, not even books, in some sense, and they came out of a capital, and that was important, and they

Joy of a Toy Story

Plastic-figure maker Peter Cole relishes the care and affection which went into making Toy Story, despite it being Walt Disney and all computers.

I was told I would love Toy Story. In spite of this I wasn't in a rush to see it because I hate cartoons. I also, like many people, rather resent Walt Disney and his evil empire, and his allies like McDonald's, missionaries trying to rid the world of its cultural diversity and bring us the true word of bland, thoughtless consumerism.

I finally surrendered and watched my seven-year-old niece's video of Toy Story; and I did love it. It is a moral fable for all time, and particularly for our time.

There is much in it that merely dazzles with its brilliance. We see reflections in polished floors and on every shiny object; and everything casts a shadow in the sun, while when it rains we can see droplets slipping down the window panes.

All this is marvellous in a rather superficial way. They are all things that could not have been done with more "primitive" animation techniques and it is astonishing that it is possible to do them using computer animation. But it is always a mildly irritating distraction to see signs of things being done to show off rather than according to their appropriateness. It seems preferable that there should be a sober assessment of both established and new idioms with the aim of selecting the best of each.

Interestingly enough the story in Toy Story is about soberly appreciating both the established and the new and appreciating the best of each. The story is told from the point of view of a small boy's collection of toys, and in particular

were hidden even in the capital, and as now, or rather remembering back to the weeks ago in which it happened, the delving, as then, remembering back a decade ago to the original discovery, there was the idea that they could be a way, "SPECTACULAR TIMES", that was their name, "BIGGER CAGE, LONGER CHAINS", "ANIMALS", they were two, and they were hidden because they were not available to all, it was necessary to make a special journey, and they were hidden because they were anonymous, but as is always the case, how can there be anonymity where there is so much identity, so much self identity, so much sense of moulding a self identity, which is so clear now that then, at that time, back a decade, there was the need to mould identity, and it was seduction, and the seduction was the capital, and the hiddenness in the capital, and more their senses of another capital, for they were, no matter of their sense of immediacy then, at that time, a decade ago, and even now, or rather then, a few weeks ago when the delving, for their style, and more than style, their process is all about immediacy, a now, a now then a decade and even weeks ago, a sense of making a self, of that process, but behind the immediacy there was the sense of a classical age, the obvious one, and a classical capital, the obvious one, it was Paris, and it was May 1968, for that was the time, and that was they, and they held that time in the white space between their photocopied lines, the spectacle, that was the spectacle held then and even now in the "SPECTACULAR TIMES", never named, nor was the other word, named elsewhere, perhaps never understood, perhaps understood now more so than then, for it was a decade ago, and at the time of the passage, the word was "SITUATIONIST", enough, this is another thing, but key, for they were in the box, and all that was in the box is key, the box from, where else, an attic, the attic where else but at home, the home where else but away, the time where else but then, the time of the passage, or clearly, the first passage, for it is ceaseless, but that is for later, so enough, and there were also several catalogues, two names will suffice, the catalogue of the "VIDEOTHEQUE" at the "ICA", and the catalogue of the "IRISH FILM FESTIVAL" at the "RIVERSIDE STUDIOS", and between them these two read more, for one was an away, a series of histories on tape, a series of places on tape, for to be clear now, rather than then, there was that seduction, again, for the art, the series of arts on tape, were more than arts, they acted as icons of their place and their time, and the other was simultaneous, parallel, but different, could one be possible without the other, the catalogue of

leader amongst the toy collection by virtue both of being the boy's favourite toy and also of being a slightly bossy and pedantic bureaucrat. We see Woody ousted from his pre-eminent position by the arrival of a new toy, Buzz Lightyear. Buzz represents the ultimate in novelty - suggesting that the story must be set a decade or so ago: he is a plastic, jointed astronaut doll with a battery operated speech mechanism and a light-up "laser beam" on his arm. He emerges from a cardboard space ship. The most telling feature about Buzz as a symbol of the arrogant blinkeredness of innovation for its own sake (and also his most endearing attribute) is his insistence on his own importance, refusing to believe that he is merely a toy. As he explains to the other toys his mission to save the universe from the Evil Emperor Zurg, we see that he is in fact unknowingly reciting the blurb on his packaging. The rest of the toys, as fickle as their owner, are spellbound by Buzz's unshakeable belief in himself as the embodiment of all that is new and powerful and therefore wonderful.

The story puts Buzz and Woody into the hands of a force which threatens both of them: Sid, the boy next door. The perils which they endure in Sid's house, and their ultimate escape through mutual aid, bring about changes in both Woody and Buzz. Woody shakes off his jealousy of Buzz, which was warping his former good nature. Meanwhile Buzz is brought to a due sense of his place in the world: he ultimately recognises that it is no shameful thing to be a toy representing an astronaut, rather than the astronaut itself; and that if being this year's model is your only asset then Christmas is an ominous time.

I find the moral both persuasive and heartening. But I would not expect any sceptic to be convinced by the fable as I have laid it out here. What is so magnificent about Toy Story is the way that the film's makers' love of all the toys is conveyed, the old and the new all having their own charm. Toys in the film are appreciated absolutely for themselves. The fact that computer animation can present a virtually photographically realistic image, and yet there is also clearly the facility on the part of the humans constructing the image to sieve out what they don't want, means that every detail has extra solidity and significance: so we know for example when we look at the toy soldiers in Toy Story that the ejector pin marks on their backs, and the split lines down their sides, and the bases under their feet are all there because these plastic soldiers are to be enjoyed for what they are rather than an idealised projection of