

PIXAR ORIGINALITY AT ITS BEST

James Carroll

Set in a galaxy not so far away, WALL-E is the story of one lovable animated automaton and his search for companionship in a future scorched and empty Earth. Puttering around the desolate and dirty world performing the duty he was built for, WALL-E (pronounced Wally) collects up rubbish, compacts it and then stacks it. Performing this task for 700 lonely years, WALL-E has built up a whole city of scrapscreppers made from his cubed and creatively piled garbage, left by the human race before they abandoned the pooped planet.

This extended isolation has also resulted in a glitch in WALL-E's workings - he has developed a personality. An inquisitive collector and a lover of classic musical cinema (*Hello Dolly!* is his single tape), WALL-E is more man than machine. So when he meets the sleek and sexy search bot from space EVE, it's unsurprising that he falls head-over-treads for her. But when she inadvertently stumbles upon the answer to earth's salvation and is whisked away to home base in outer space, WALL-E is thrown into an intergalactic adventure as he chases his crush across the galaxy.

It is, of course, clichéd to say about a Pixar production, but the genius of WALL-E is undoubtedly



its storytelling and characterisation. This time, it's especially apt seeing as this is a near-silent movie about a box with eyes that can only communicate through subvocal beeps and peeps. It's more a pantomime production for the majority of the time rather than the usual wittily dialogue-driven story Pixar is famous for, especially during the captivating opening third where we watch the cute little

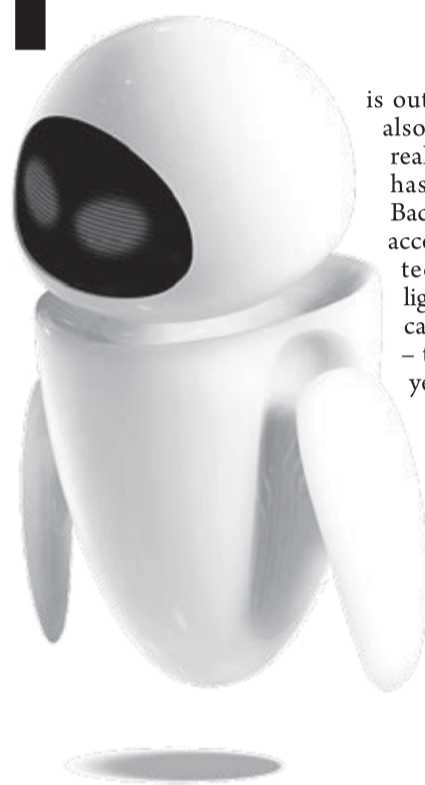
bot trundling around the trash-strewn city simply going about his business.

As expected, Pixar have also raised the animation bar once again. From the intricacies of WALL-E's workings to the sweeping computer-generated vistas on the abandoned Earth, to the alien outer space environments and the futuristic floating cruise ship, to the magnet-powered transforming of EVE, the level of detail on show

is out of this world. There's also a new level of photorealism to everything that hasn't been seen before. Backgrounds are now easily accomplishable, but it's the technical aspects - the lighting, depth-perception, camera moves and zooms - that have come on light years.

In simple terms, imperfection has been added to the usually pristine capturing process, which perversely makes the finished product that more perfect to the trained cinema-going eye. Equal parts belly-laugh funny and heart-warmingly moving, WALL-E will move you from titters to

tears and back again. In between, you'll fall in love with the cute characters and their quirks (look out for M-O, the cleaner bot that almost steals the show), experience what is undoubtedly the greatest sound design heard in cinema ever (by Star Wars guru Ben Burtt) and be delivered an unsubtle criticism on lazy consumer culture, a damnation of mega-global corporations and the currently in-vogue eco-message. This is cinematic perfection - an original, experimental experience like no other.



IN THE CITY

VALLEY FIESTA

Taking place over the weekend of September 12-14 in the Fortitude Valley precinct of Brisbane, Valley Fiesta is a celebration of food, fashion, dance, art and music.

The Valley's already legendary live music scene will be under the spotlight as scores of national and local acts descend to the area for three days of free outdoor entertainment.

Throw into the mix cabaret, fashion parades, buskers, dance, markets and of course lots of fun

entertainment for the little ones, and you begin to have a sense of what it is that makes the Valley so special. Visit www.valleyfiesta.com.au for more information.

THE COMPLETE HOME SHOW

Held over three days, this will be the ideal opportunity to develop home ideas, scope out new products, techniques and trends, and gain advice from industry experts.

Products from a diverse range of exhibitors will be complemented by demonstrations, seminars, edu-

cational forums and competitions.

In addition, there will be qualified industry trades personnel on hand to offer advice on building, renovating, restoring and general DIY jobs.

Visitors are invited to bring plans, photos and diagrams to "help the experts help you". September 12-14, Moore Park, Sydney. Visit www.thecompletehomeshow.com.au for more information.

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An opportunity to take time out of

everyday life to stop and smell the flowers.

You can experience more than a million spring flowering bulbs, 65 varieties of tulips, people dressed in Dutch costume, wooden clogs, food and daily entertainment.

Delight in the magic of spring at the Tesselaar Tulip Festival from September 11, Monbulk Road, Silvan VIC. Visit www.tulipfestival.com.au for more information.



The great skill of kindness and beauty

Oil painting, the most popular and influential visual art, has delighted and informed viewers with its realistic portrayal of heavenly events and earthly achievement. Traditional Western painting praises God, extols saints, shows the beauty of nature and depicts the human figure realistically.

New Tang Dynasty Television (NTDTV) has organised the Chinese International Figure Painting Competition to inspire artists to portray purely benevolent and beautiful subjects. This competition offers artists an opportunity to exhibit the best in themselves and a high standard of realistic portraiture, recognising figure paintings that express traditional Chinese virtues and values using techniques of classical Western realism.

Since oil painting was introduced to world culture, realism has waxed and waned. When moral standards decline, realism goes out of style.

Creating a piece of art does not mean blindly following the masters of the past. Previous cultural highpoints are all rooted in the inheritance of the past while adding new developments. Every skilled artist makes his personal and emotional mark using the techniques of his time. A creator imbued with idealism understands what to accept and what to discard, presenting the significance of his era and walking his own path.

Early in its history, Western art drew inspiration from the natural world and is its greatest strength. But the first paintings were far from lifelike realism. The vividly coloured bust of Egyptian Queen Nefertiti presents both the realistic and idealised form, which in turn inspired later Greek and Roman art.

When Renaissance artists transcended the style of the day, invented better techniques and discovered new materials, art reached a splendour never before achieved. The paintings of this period explored the use of perspective, elevating two-dimensional space to three dimensions. These artists controlled changes in light, giving



Great improvements...Jan van Eyck combined a northern European Gothic-style with his improved oil paint medium, creating triptych masterpieces such as the celebrated *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*.

objects more realism in contrast and weight.

They mastered human anatomy, accurately showing changes in posture. They presented emotion as never before seen. The achievements in realism during the Renaissance formed the foundation for all Western art that followed and became the standard for evaluating great art.

Western European artists discovered how to mix pigmented oils. Initially, these oil mixtures sealed tempera paintings and painted sculptures. In the early 15th century, Jan van Eyck of the Netherlands, after repeated experiments, produced a stable siccative oil mixture of linseed oil, nut oil and resin that could be used to bind mineral pigments, and oil replaced tempera as the media of choice.

Van Eyck's improved medium of drying oil paint has a fine, smooth texture. The mixture does not dry

quickly, giving artists time to work on the piece. When dry, van Eyck's oil paint produces a smooth, translucent and glossy finish. The paint does not change colour or lose its lustre. Because it provides many benefits not found in tempera or fresco pigments, oil paint soon became popular. Especially when Renaissance painters pursued verisimilitude in figure painting, this oil paint seemed a gift from Heaven.

Van Eyck used his new medium in the northern European Gothic style, creating triptych masterpieces such as the celebrated *Madonna of Chancellor Rolin*.

In layer after layer, the high density of his pigments rendered a level of realism not previously seen. His figures, however, appeared stiff and rigid. Compared to their Italian counterparts, rendering the human figure as depicted by northern European painters had a long way to go.

Tinygold's labour of love

Kieran Burke

Founded by Mariam Arcilla and Megan Cope in 2007, Tinygold project's *Tales from the Cold Ghost*, the two-year-old non-profit artist-run initiative is gaining momentum as a must-see event on South-East Queensland's cultural calendar.

"We had an opportunity at university to set up a phantom company with a dream project," Mariam tells me from Tinygold's impressive Mermaid Beach gallery set among an industrial estate. "My dream was to have a gallery space that promoted Gold Coast artists cultivating our arts scene and I began to realise that I could really do this. As a student, it was easy to sit around, complain and feel frustrated because there were no spaces or opportunities, but it was another thing to take the initiative, find a space and make it work," she says.

Last year's exhibition saw the girls using a gallery nearer to the beach on the Gold Coast Highway, but interest in their project and 800 people in a single room on opening night dictated the search for a larger

property.

Mariam and Megan's 2008 "space", as they put it, is quite the understatement. I was expecting the half-baked effort of struggling young artists and with the gallery situated along the road from panel beaters, car mechanics and a motor cycle gang clubhouse, I had every reason to be concerned. However, the open plan, white-walled and lacquered concrete floors of 19 Karen Ave have produced the most aesthetically pleasing, professional, contemporary and soon-to-be in-demand gallery on the Coast; its potential is overwhelming.

"We have the tradesmen popping their heads in from time to time," Mariam tells me. "They are the first to admit they don't always understand our contemporary art, but they can appreciate what we are doing and can see why it's important."

"Constantly, I was thinking of moving to Melbourne," she says. "Sure, I could make more money, be learning more and be surrounded by all the culture. But at the same time, there is this beauty on the Gold Coast that is devoid of that, so the escapism allows you to concentrate on so many

creative pursuits. You know, artists choose to live here; it's not because they are stuck here." And Mariam is quick to acknowledge that her point of difference is an original idea in an emerging area of Australia. "We couldn't do this in Melbourne as it would just be so passive; these things happen every week there."

But the challenge remains to break down the clichés and stereotypes associated with South-East Queensland and receive local government assistance.

You can sense the pride of achievement in Mariam, an ambassador for the arts that the Gold Coast should be proud of. "I quit my job to do this and I'm here every day, so it's definitely a labour of love."

As we wrap up the interview and photos, Mariam shares with me something that induces a smile on her face, the emotion of pride and a bit of joy. "I mean, we had people that came down from Brisbane to our opening night. That's huge!" I left regarding the heroes of this meeting, the gallery and Mariam's determination and passion for what the Gold Coast has to offer the Australian art world.

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