Colors and Shadows in Raoul Servais' Animations

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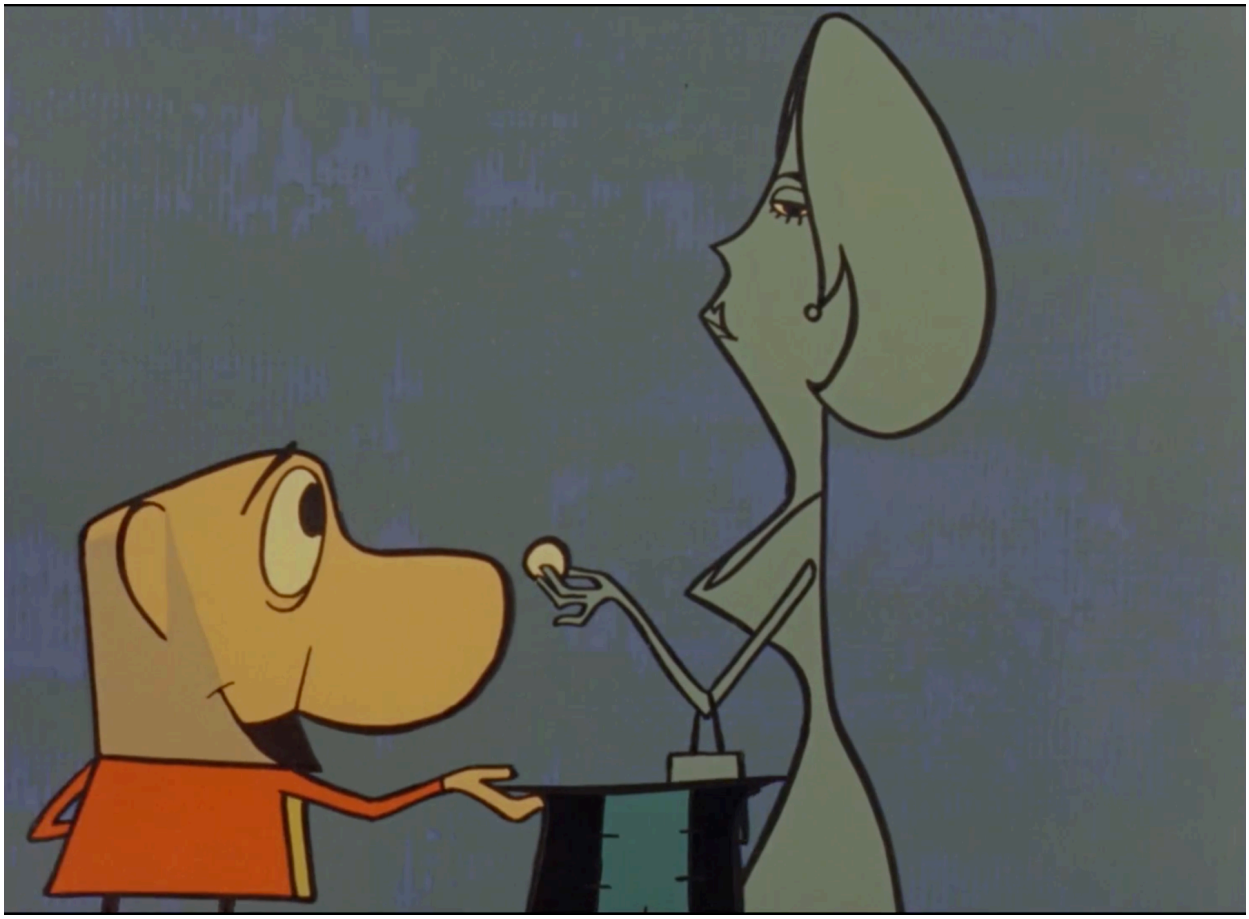
The art of Raoul Servais is concerned with the most serious criticisms of 1968 and looks for the freedom and justice that humans pursue, touch a lot of areas and contexts from religion to science, mythology to science fiction, psychology to culture: authoritarian regimes that eliminate science; armies trying to sweep colors from the world; executives trying to share the body of a dead mermaid; filmmakers trying to be faster than their shadows; bosses who incorporate hippies' colorful ideas into their own benefits; 'super powers' that invite people to religion with theocratic gas bombs. Consumption, technology, authority, unhappiness and lost meaning woven with commodity values.



False Note (*De Valse Noot*, 1963)

In one of his earlier films, *False Note* (*De Valse Noot*, 1963), Servais creates an anti-consumerist discourse by drawing a caricature similar to Jacques Tati's character Monsieur Hulot, who cannot keep up with the modern world. In the movie, an old-fashioned musician wanders the streets with his music box with one note broken and is about to drown in the destructive chaos of the city. Neon-lit images of alienated consumer culture, coin-based players, pinball machines, atomic women advertisements, wall posters forming a collage with dollar bills and newspaper pieces.

As a voice-over says at the beginning of the film, "the elegy played by the musician, who is not a part of this conventional culture where people know what they will be hungry for, does not belong to this time either. This elegy is a single note only, distorted for money-hungry people, stacked in standard apartments. The only thing common to the burned elegy is the tears of a carousel in an abandoned carnival area.

Servais has an anti-militarist and anti-totalitarian concern in *Colorphobia* (*Chromophobbia*, 1966), compared to the sharpened allegory of standardization in *False Note*. In *Colorphobia*, a black army is hostile to colors, and enters into a colorful, lively, happy and peaceful city and eliminates all the colors of the city. It uniformizes the people by the passing depictions of them through a production line. What an experienced painter could draw now is to paint guardhouses with right-left commands. The grown seedlings sprout like gallows.

Colorphobia (*Chromophobbia*, 1966)

Emphasizing the destructive effects of the army, black people and uniformity with surreal images, Servais also points to many ongoing events of the period: those who lost their innocence in the Vietnam war and the decline of the *Springs*, those who died for nothing. The central countries of the Cold War worship oil, while there is the continuation of the oppressive factions in the Soviets and the roundabouts of authoritarian socialism. *Colorphobia* calls for a hope for freedom and equality: a red flower grown by a child in the prison camps who jumps from one frame to the next, transforms the camp into an enthusiastic, colorful and poetic atmosphere to set people free.

Scraps of the Industrial World

Mermaid (*Siren*, 1968) is Servais' criticism of the industrial world that heralds postmodernism. In the midst of the imagery of extinct dinosaurs and cranes resembling oil drillers; a fisherman is implicitly the last example of an endangered species with the visualized skeletons of hooked fishes. A mythological mermaid gets stuck on a crane, and is thrown to the dock. It is the transition to a true empire. Doctors and zoologists cut her body with the bureaucracy's sword of divine justice and share it among themselves. The mermaid goes to another dimension with the love of a flutist sailor who draws his own silhouette next to the silhouette of her corpse in the dock, like the sailors fascinated by the music of the sirens in mythology. A means freedom, justice, nature and emotion from the domination of animal industry, religion and bureaucracy.

Mermaid (*Siren*, 1968)

In this fresco, Servais draws the picture of a gloomy, red and frightening world where the sounds of 'siren' gnaw at the ears. It is as if he measures the human footprint in the water, whose ontological position has been transferred to science, religion and industry. He reiterates his lament in *False Note*, looking at an order dominated by oil, mechanics, civil servants and the divine, both with the eyes of 68 souls and with a postmodern critique of industrial pollution. *Mermaid* is a surrealist, naturalist poem like the lament of the musician in *False Note* and the red flower in *Colorphobia* depicting an exploited world.

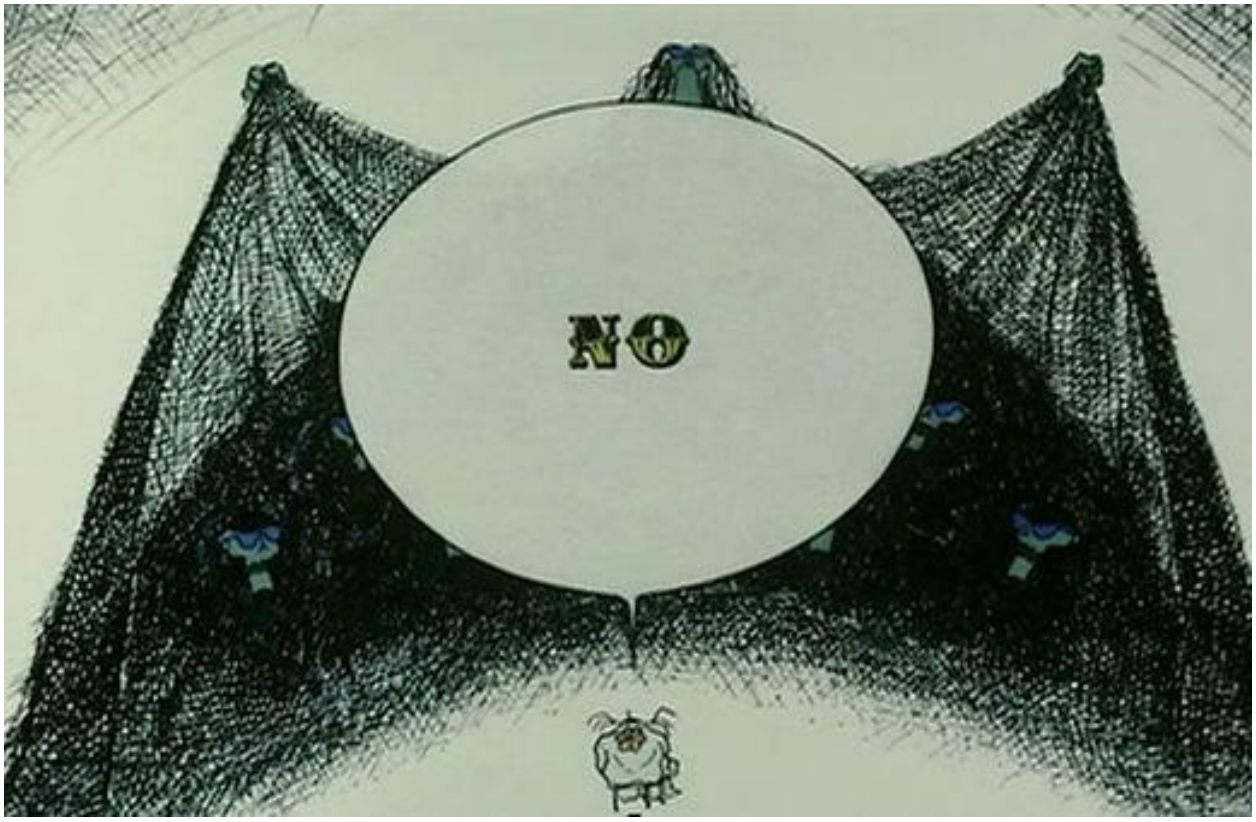
In *Goldframe* (1969), Servais' criticisms became more direct after *Mermaid*. It is a psychological mockery of "Hollywood producer". An egoistic and narcissistic producer wants to be the first to make a 270 mm film, gives orders and fights a speed duel with his own shadow under the lights of a studio. Neurosis, ambition and passion for speed, conveyed by the harmony of percussion instruments, punish Goldframe by leaving him with a caricatured goon image.

Goldframe (1969)

Anti-Militarian Attitude

To Speak or Not to Speak (1970) is like a synthesis of the cartoonish *Goldframe*, the commodity criticism in *False Note*, and the anti-militarism and anti-totalitarianism in *Colorphobia*. The film reveals Servais's stance on the ongoing and protracted Vietnam war, a standard question asked by a TV reporter about the current political situation is answered in an incomprehensible language by lethargic and insensitive people.

Trivial answers filling thought bubbles; a TV mogul who manipulates a hippie's colorful and flamboyant “make love” bubble for his own benefit; the compromise of the hippie with the capitalist order is captioned by the resemblances of an artist used for commodity and consumption frenzy. There is a "censored" stamp that an authoritarian regime places on the artist's balloons. Absurd and senseless answers given by indifferent soldiers to a reporter's questions.



To Speak or Not to Speak (1970)

Servais takes an anarchist moral stance in *To Speak or Not to Speak*, and explains how people can easily be seduced by capitalism in the world of money and commodities. The colorful dreams of the 68 generation gets quickly adopted and appropriated for private interests. Until his last film about the first military introduction of *Tank* (2016), Servais criticized the ideal of a 'spider-minded' society of a militarist world in which people are ceaselessly trained for war and military.

In his harshest anti-war portrayal, *Operation X-70* (1971), Servais questions the ethics and anti-humanist consequences of wars: "What would happen if the same thing happened to you?" In the beginning of the film, a new and legal bomb, secretly developed by a superpower country, is proudly introduced by a religious leader. This chemical bomb puts its objects in a happy and intoxicated state, aiming to help its targets in Asia and "find their dervish and religious nature". However, the bomb accidentally falls on a Western country called Nebelux gives a different result here: The inhabitants of this country of religious nature, now completely evolve into angels. Servais is more concerned with the uses of science and technology for the hypocritical arrogance of religion and racism, revealing the real cruelty from a "humanitarian" bomb play, examining the ethics in the conscience of Westerners, and pointing out the destructive dangers of technology on the natural balance through those exposed to mutation.

Nostalgia

In *Pegasus* (1973), another technology sarcasm, Servais describes the battle of a lonely blacksmith against windmills, who loses the meaning of his life with the development of technology and refuses to comply with changing values. Victories and defeats won and crops reaped with the help of horses, which have shared the fate of humanity for generations, now surrender themselves to the mechanical products of technology. This 'rapid' progress is the reason why the blacksmith looks at life and nature with meaningless eyes. However, the metal horse that he created to resist technology and placed in a niche with a cross, reminiscent of pagan gods, is also an example of restless technology. This Pegasus, born from the metal of the blacksmith, spreads to the "mother of cattle", catches up with the speed of technology and traps the blacksmith.

Pegasus was more influenced by the works of another surrealist painter, Paul Delvaux. Servais paints an expressionist abstract line and color from the nature in which the blacksmith is in the middle, presenting his spiritual life. The film is an expression of an ordinary person's revenge. Servais had previously worked with the surrealist painter René Magritte.

Servais's interest in Delavaux is even more evident in *Taxandria* (1994), in which he describes the phantasmagoric world he describes based on Delvaux's paintings, and in *Nocturnal Butterflies* (*Nachtvlinders*, 1997), which he dedicated to Delvaux.

Harpya (1979)

Constantly revolving around social satire in his films, Servais expresses a psychological horror of authority on a sharp level in *Harpya* (1979). Harpya, the mythological bird with six eagles and a woman above, is about to be killed. She is rescued by a bourgeois. The bourgeois, who pays the penalty for his heroism by losing his food to the creature every time, aims to escape by killing the creature. Harpya is rescued by another hero this time. Like Sisyphus, who in mythology was punished by the gods with pushing a rock up a hill, humanity is doomed to suffer the repetition of the same. In *Harpya*, Servais uses grotesque images, stylized graphics and background elements, and develops an avant-garde technique that he later defines as 'Servaisgraphy' by blending line and live images.

Illusions of the Earth

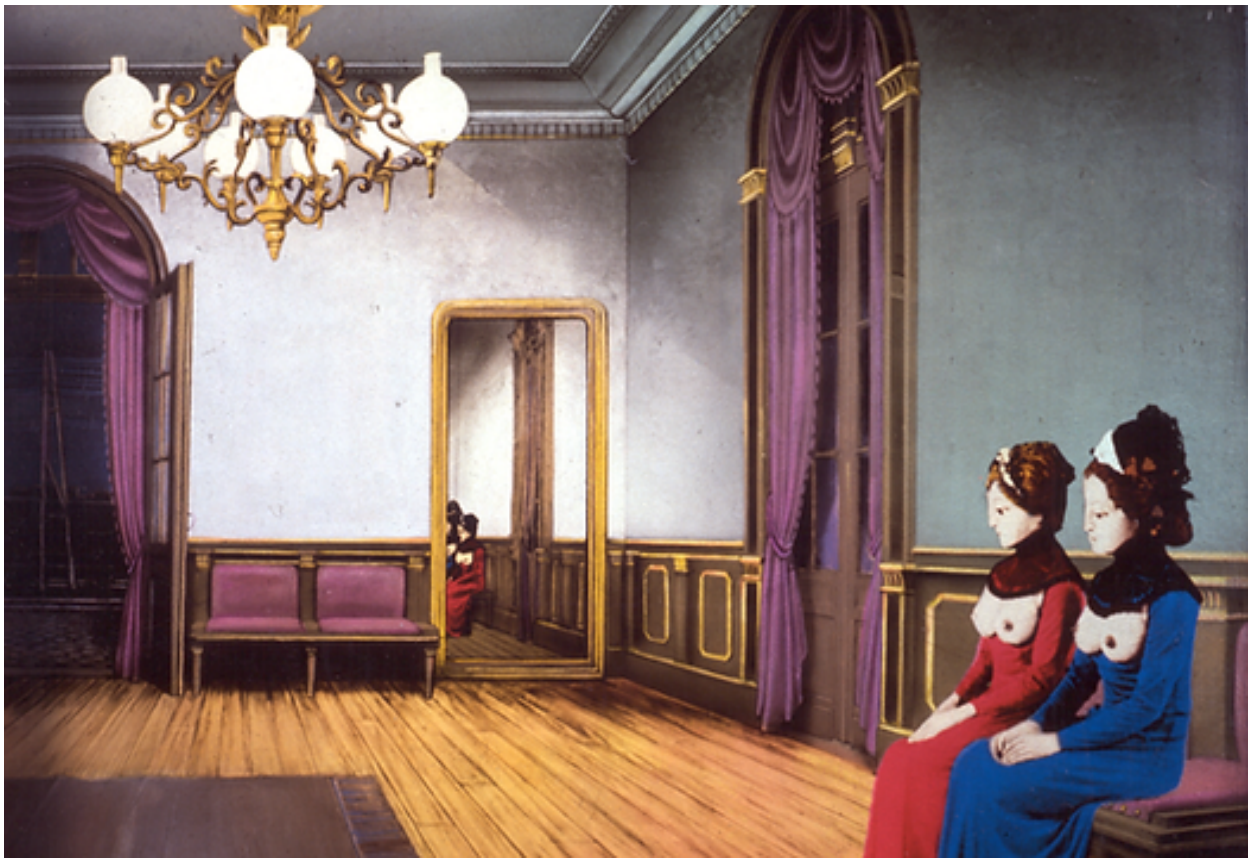
With *Taxandria* (1994), Servais reintroduces the live-line fusion technique *Servaisgrafi*, which he melts in the same pot, and makes the film inspired by the Paul Delvaux' *Temple* (1949), oscillates between a utopian world where there is no past and future, where clocks are prohibited, and the fictional 'real' world of the film. In fact, it is not clear which of these two worlds is 'real' and which is fiction. A religious-totalitarian authority reigns this place, barred from memory, sexual equality, literature, science, technology, progress, and curiosity. are. An oppressive, fantasmatic and anti-utopian world ruled by a two-headed ruler skeleton and his security guards, operating with a word-of-mouth information system.

This motif of a society suffering from mental illness is disrupted by a curiosity that resists it in the style of Leonardo Da Vinci. The 'real world', which is parallel/symmetrical to Taxandria, waits to be rescued by another heir to sovereignty, a prince who visits Taxandria. To the terror of authority, another authority would respond.

Servais constantly has problems with the uses of science and technology in his films. He attempts to build a bridge between them and his art in *Taxandria*. He tries to infiltrate authority from new generations, like the prince. The secret of Servais's transformation is unknown, but his war with military authority, religion and totalitarianism continues.

In *Nocturnal Butterflies*, Servais expands to new horizons by inviting the art of his predecessor Delvaux to Servaisgrafi, which integrates cinematic plastic elements, graphics and animation. Two silent women, whose emotions are suppressed in open-breasted clothes, resemble statues with senseless eyes; with absurd bourgeois existence turning into a carnival with a lively butterfly visiting their mansion.

Servais reveals the derivatives of femininity with the female subject who suffers the pains of existence, the single and static reflection on the mirror, presenting the allegory of woman liberated by breaking its patriarchal boundaries. Women woke up briefly with the arrival of the butterfly, a symbol of enthusiasm, and dance in a fetishistic bourgeois fashion. They are suppressed: A butterfly collector, getting off the night train, catches the butterfly, and ends the night with terror, which turns into a fair with the butterfly's visit.



Nocturnal Butterflies (*Nachtvlinders*, 1997)

Atraksion (2001)

Shackled prisoners who form a ritual by constantly walking in a deserted, dead-end courtyard with peeling shells of the ground, a curious prisoner notices a tree rising to the above from the ground, caught in the ecstasy of the police, clumsily climbing to an electric lamp. Hopes for freedom drag the character into another dead end. But after this messianic enthusiast, all the prisoners follow him. Breaking down the walls with shackles, that is, to the borders of life, will open a new path to enlightenment.

Servais continues to break the spell in the visages of the world and depictions of detention, the mirror illusions of *Nocturnal Butterflies* in *Atraksion* (2001). The camera zooms back and gradually illustrates the chainballs turning into the image of the world. He connects the scientific curiosity in Taxandria with the problem of freedom.

In brief, an oppressed society, silenced, censored and banned from questioning has limits and is itself a shackle. Servais imagines a hope for humanity through the act of the curious prisoner. It is a parable that the imprisoned curiosity and striving for freedom are a lesson for the people of the world, whose definitions, boundaries and rules have been set, to take a lesson for their future, which requires some 'gravity' to reach the light. Human beings, both described and destined in books, must first create their own existence for freedom by breaking the spell, the illusion on the earth.

In each of his films, Servais has a lesson to teach a new horizons in each film, Servais' art strives for the future of humanity's chains. Expressing how so-called virtues are cracked and dangerous, Servais gets rid of these virtues one by one. He depicted visages of the fantasmagorical universes to reveal the real universe.