

Azur & Asmar THE PRINCES' QUEST

Michel Ocelot

Biography

Michel Ocelot was born on the French Riviera and spent his childhood in Guinea and his adolescence in the Anjou region of France. After studying art, he learned about animated films by directing short films during his vacations with a group of friends who each used different techniques (cartoons, puppets, etc.). Michel Ocelot also

enjoyed animating paper cut-out characters. He kept a taste for varied creations and pared-down techniques. He directed the animated series, *Les Aventures de Gédéon* (1976, based on Benjamin Rabier's work), then used characters and backgrounds made with lacy paper in his first professional short film, *Les Trois Inventeurs* (1979). This highly original film was rewarded with a BAFTA in London. Since this film, Michel Ocelot has written the screenplays and done the artwork of all his creations. After this, came the following short films: *Les Filles de l'égalité* (1981) which won the Special Jury Prize at the Albi Festival, *Beyond Oil* (1982) and *La Légende du Pauvre Bossu* (1982 – César for Best Animated Film). Michel Ocelot returned to the TV series format with *La Princesse Insensible* (1986) comprising 13 x 4-minute episodes, and directed the

short film *Les Quatre Voeux* (1987). His third series, *Ciné Si*, (1989 – 8 x 12-minute episodes) was animated with the shadow theater technique: carefully cut-out black paper silhouettes. Several of these sequences later appeared in *Princes & Princesses* (2000).

He wrote the 26-minute film, *Les Contes de la nuit* (1992), made up of three sequences, then embarked upon the adventure of his first feature film. In 1998, the general public became aware of Michel Ocelot, thanks to the huge box-office and critical success of *Kirikou and the Sorceress*. The film's popularity was so great that it led Michel Ocelot to relate more of his little hero's adventures in *Kirikou and the Wild Beasts* (2005) which he co-directed with Bénédicte Galup.

Azur & Asmar, minutely prepared from 2001 on, is a project full of new experiences: Michel Ocelot worked with a live-action producer (Christophe Rossignon, of Nord Ouest), chose to combine 3D and 2D, and brought together his production and animation team in Paris, the town where he lives. Unlike most other French animation productions, *Azur & Asmar* was made entirely in Paris.

Michel Ocelot was also President of the ASIFA (International Animated Film Association) from 1994 to 2000.

Michel Ocelot

Screenwriter, Director, Animator, and Graphic Designer.

Selected filmography

2006 AZUR & ASMAR

Production Nord Ouest Production, MacGuff. 90 mins.

2005 KIRIKOU & THE WILD BEASTS

Production Les Armateurs, Gebeka Films, France 3 cinéma, and Studio O

2000 PRINCES & PRINCESSES

Production La Fabrique, Les Armateurs. 70 mins.

Cinema Prize of the SACD (Société des Auteurs Compositeurs Dramatiques),

Paris.

Children's and Adults' Jury Prizes, Chicago Festival (USA).

Special Jury Prize, OCIC, Mar Del Plata Festival (Argentina).

1998 KIRIKOU & THE SORCERESS

Production Les Armateurs. 71 mins.

23 international awards including:

Grand Prix, Annecy Animation Film Festival (France).

British Animation Award for Best Feature Film, London (UK).

Children's and Adults' Jury Prizes, Chicago Festival (USA).