**Disney’s Art of Storytelling**

Just before Christmas I managed to see the exhibition “Disney’s Art of Storytelling” at Brandts Art Museum here in Odense, Denmark, where I live. “Disney’s Art of Storytelling” is a collaboration between Brandts and the Walt Disney Animation Research Library in Los Angeles. and the exhibition tells - for the first time - the story behind the creation of some of the most well-known Disney characters such as Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and the Little Mermaid

Many of Walt Disney’s animated films have been inspired by myths, legends and fables, not to mention the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen. “The Little Mermaid” and “Frozen” are inspired by the Hans Christian Andersen’s fairy tales “The Little Mermaid” and “The Snow Queen” and two of Disney’s animated short films - “The Ugly Duckling” and “The Little Matchgirl” - as well as “The Steadfast Tin Soldier” (Piano Concerto No. 2) from “Fantasia 2000” are inspired by Andersen’s fairy tales as well. The Danish fairy tale writer was born in Odense, so the collaboration between the Odense-based Brandts Museum and the Walt Disney Animation Research Library is no co-incidence.

The exhibition takes up the entire first floor of Brandts, but unfortunately photographing is not allowed, so you have to make do with some photos from Brandts’ website. Too bad, as it is an amazing exhibition that spans the history of Walt Disney Animation Studios from the animated shorts of the 1930s to the films of today and it includes some rarely seen art­work from the development of the films and their leading characters.

There is so much to explore as you can follow the development of the characters from “Fantasia”, “Hercules”, “Robin Hood”, “Sleeping Beauty”, “Snow White”, “The Little Mermaid” and others as well as the ideas behind many of the shorts like “Brave Little Tailor”, “John Henry”, “The Goddess of Spring”, “The Golden Touch”, “The Grasshopper and the Ants”, “The Tortoise and the Hare” and “Three Little Pigs”.

You can also see what inspired Disney to his films and how, and here a letter from Eleanor Roosevelt caught my eye. In this letter to Walt Disney, Eleanor Roosevelt asks him to make an animated film inspired by Heinrich Hoffmann’s classic, German children’s book "Struwwelpeter" (or “Shockheaded Peter”) from 1845. The book consists of stories with clear morals demonstrating the disastrous consequences of misbehaviour in an exaggerated way and Disney obeyed the President’s wife by making “Donald’s Better Self” in 1938.

Not only the exhibited works are amazing. The exhibition rooms themselves are all painted to look magically like backgrounds in Disney films and on your way through the exhibition, you can sit down and learn more with the help of iPads. You can also see some of Disney’s “Silly Symphonies” as well as short documentaries about their making in a screening area with two rows of cinema seats or you can visit the exhibition cinema, “Spektaklets Bio” that also screens “Silly Symphonies” along with a number of the most popular Disney animated full-length films such as “Fantasia”, “Frozen”, “Robin Hood”, “Snow White”, “The Little Mermaid” and “The Sword in the Stone”. Within the “Spektaklet” area, children and the young at heart can even try creating simple animations.

“Disney’s Art of Storytelling” continues until March 12., 2017 and the entrance fee is DKK 90 (expensive!) except for Thursday evenings, where you can visit the entire museum free of charge. Yay!

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