



ICARUS

The story of the boy
who flew too close to the sun

6 APRIL 2022



IRIS GROUP present

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The story of the boy
who flew too close to the sun

A film by **Carlo Vogele**

NATIONAL RELEASE
6 APRIL 2022

2021 – Luxembourg, Belgium, France
Animation – 1h16

SYNOPSIS

On the island of Crete, every corner is a playground for Icarus, the son of the great inventor Daedalus. During an exploration near the palace of Knossos, the little boy makes a strange discovery: A child with the head of a bull is kept locked up on the orders of King Minos. In secret, unbeknownst even to his father, Icarus befriends the young Minotaur named Asterion. But destiny takes a turn when the latter is taken into a labyrinth. Will Icarus be able to save his friend and change the course of a story written by the gods?

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Icarus takes wing

In Greek mythology, Icarus is a figure whose downfall may be well-known but his story not so much, unlike that of his father Daedalus. This was a godsend for the director Carlo Vogele: *"When I was looking for a hero from mythology, Icarus appeared to me like a blank page. The myth is all about flying and falling. When you read the texts of Ovid, there are very few details given. So, Icarus just came up naturally. There is nothing on his childhood. Everything had to be constructed."* Thus, a new story was born in complicity with scriptwriter Isabelle Andrivet.

However, another character almost took centre stage during the initial reflections. Carlo Vogele recalls: *"Six years ago I started to get really interested in Cretan mythology: the Minotaur, King Minos, Queen Pasiphae, Theseus the Athenian... At the centre of these stories is Daedalus, the faithful architect-inventor. He is involved in all these fates and stories."* So why couldn't such a protagonist play the hero? *"The character is ambiguous, which is an asset*

for a filmmaker. But he doesn't evolve in mythology: he remains in this in-between state. Daedalus is an amoral artist who only obeys his genius. He is not interested in the consequences of his inventions, such as his labyrinth, which will go on to play a tragic role." Meanwhile, in his shadow lurks a certain Icarus, waiting to shine...

Underrated in mythology, he is a full-fledged hero here. The mischievous little boy, resourceful fisherman at the beginning of this adventure, will discover a wonderful bond with the Minotaur/Asterion, between acrobatics and telepathy... A friendship as big as the cliffs of Crete.

Weaving threads between the characters

Curious and unprejudiced, Icarus never considers Asterion as a monster, unlike the adults. Like an ancient precursor of *The Little Prince*, things are not always what they seem in this story. *"Children are often unbothered by aspects that can block adults. This truth can be found in films like The Iron Giant or My Neighbour*



Totoro. The monster is often not who you think it is." Better still, Icarus will make the Minotaur his brother, someone he understands even without words. A relationship that is obviously contrasted with the strained relationship he has with his father Daedalus. It had to be nurtured. Carlo Vogele underlines: "When you read the ancient texts, it is told in a very dry way, like some sort of report that accumulates facts. So, we took pleasure in detailing the relationships between our characters. To make them more fleshed out."

Continuing with Daedalus and Icarus: Father and son represent opposite philosophies in the face of their destiny. Daedalus is almost resigned, but Icarus, helped by his friend Asterion, imagines a bright future. A small treatise on animated philosophy with a breath of optimism. "Mythology has been the same for thousands of years, but its stories change their meaning according to our interpretations and according to the times", states the director. "For this grand family film, I wanted to tell the story of the adventure of the young Icarus who braves the cruel world

of adults. Behind the courage of this hero, there are beautiful themes to reflect on, the relationship between parents and children, disobedience, ... But high above these big questions, there is the simple and obvious relationship between two friends!"

A maze-like scenario

Much like the swirl of the Nautilus, which inspires Daedalus to create his famous labyrinth, the story picks up as we approach its core. After the childlike innocence of Icarus slowly disappears, the characters are drawn into more complex realities, where fates are already sealed... A turning point occurs when Asterion, the illegitimate child of Queen Pasiphae and a giant bull, is locked away inside the labyrinth. Carlo Vogele explains: "This scenario and the change of pace were imposed by the issues that become more adult as the story progresses." Everything is intertwined: the arrival of Theseus who intends to kill the Minotaur, Ariane, King Minos' daughter, who falls in love with Theseus, Icarus who hands

her the thread, ... Not without suspense, the young Cretan will try to avoid his seemingly inescapable destiny.

Carlo Vogele and his team wanted a breath of fresh air and stepped into the footsteps of other European directors: *"I like great adventure stories like those told by Tomm Moore (Wolfwalkers) or Rémi Chayé (Calamity Jane). I try to tell strong stories myself. I have also worked for American productions which are always dialogue-heavy, a lot of gags, tiny noses, and cheesy morals. I try to offer a different style of storytelling where good and evil are not as easily dissociable, where women have big noses and where a young audience can be gripped by the harshness of the issues. Besides, I also bet that mythology appeals to children precisely because of the cruelty of its passions. The life of heroes is not easy, it is hard."* A

story that has been going on since antiquity.

Drawing the myth

To inform his team about the scenes of Icarus, Carlo Vogele visited the ancient sites of Crete. *"I returned to the site of Knossos for some location photos. The colours and lights play a very important role in this film to anchor the story in reality."* From the red stone of the palace to the blue of the sea - Icarus takes the viewer into a maze of colours. And when the light goes out, one discovers the labyrinth and its impressive usage of black colour for an unforgettable battle sequence.

The Mediterranean, a crossroads of cultures, is also an important setting for Icarus. It is the site of neighbouring but rival traditions:



those of Crete and Athens. The film plays with a diversity of cultures, for example, by mixing baroque and oriental music, but above all by combining 2D and 3D animation: *"I studied all the animation techniques and worked for studios with very different traditions, from the clay figures of Aardman to Pixar's meticulous 3D"*. To find the film's graphic identity, the director called on Édouard Cour, a successful comic book author and mythology enthusiast (creator of the Herakles comic book series). Based on his drawings, the team painted the sets for each scene, and modelled the characters in 3D on the computer. *"The 3D faces bring a subtlety to the emotions that we couldn't do without"*, enthuses the director. For a perfect inlay, the team used a trick: *"In order for the characters not to stand out from the background in strange ways, we worked*

on the shadows of the bodies with flat colours, a bit like doing 2D on 3D. The result is a simplified look that is close to a comic book." As mischievous as young Icarus.





Biography

Born in Luxembourg in 1981, Carlo Vogele studied at the Gobelins School of Animation in Paris before embarking on a multifaceted career, from Aardman Studios in Bristol to Pixar in California, where he stayed for 8 years (participating in films such as *Toy story 3*, *Brave*, *Monster Academy*, etc.) Returning to Europe in 2016 to develop a hybrid animation technique, *Icarus* is his first feature film as director.

Questions to Carlo Vogele

Is mythology an old passion of yours?

Carlo Vogele: Nearly as old as drawing (*laughs*). Like other animators, I've always drawn little animated pictures. When I was a child, I even asked my sister to use rubber erasers on my drawings (tidying up lines or drawing in the negative) and my brother to add the colour to my Donald. Meanwhile, our mother would tell us stories about mythology: Zeus, Athena, even Icarus. During my teenage years, this passion left me. And then, during a trip to Greece, it all came back. I visited Knossos and was thrown back into my childhood. I wondered why there was no animated film on the subject apart from Disney's *Hercules* and the educational cartoons on Arte.

And this wonder turned into *Icarus*?

C.V.: Yes. I created *Icarus* as a great adventure film, similar to those that marked the 1990s: *The Prince of Egypt* or *The Lion King*. The viewer was drawn into a first-hand adventure. This didn't prevent humour, which is rather rare today. Pixar's *Brave* is almost an odd one out. Since *Shrek* in 2001, parody has greatly influenced animated films, we are constantly in meta commentary and referencing pop culture. But I think that the epic dimension of mythology with fantastic heroes doesn't need artifice to please. The strength of the story prevails by itself. However, I didn't stick to a strict adaptation, and I like the idea of showing the audience a character that they think they know, while also taking a few liberties.

Which ones?

C.V.: The myth of Icarus consists of two images: the flight and the fall. Everyone expects him to burn his wings. But we wanted to surprise the audience. We found a solution in the storyboard that consolidates the link between Icarus and Asterion, which is really at the centre of the film. It came up during the course of the drawing. It was a very strong moment for me. What happens

between the bird-boy and the bull-boy, I leave that to the audience to discover.

What impact can the myth of Icarus have today?

C.V.: I think the moral of the myth "*Too high ambitions can get you burnt*" can often be misunderstood. It could lead to not believing in one's dreams, to not being curious. This interpretation didn't suit me, so the film tells another story of Icarus, without a moral warning. Besides, if you read mythology, you realise that everything that happens to the characters is decided in advance. It is the gods who act according to their whims. Everything is a bit random. And when the decision falls, the future is inevitable. This is where we took the pleasure of imagining a version of Icarus who appears to be toying with destiny.

« *Icarus appears to be toying with destiny!* »

What is your take-away from your first feature-film?

C.V.: Due to my long collaboration with Pixar, I really got to know the blockbuster culture with a lot of validation processes that drove the animators crazy as they had to start over and over again. In Europe, because budgets are also tighter, decisions are made faster. As an author, you really get to make the film you want. I wanted to create a film that combined my experiences and possessed its own identity. For example, I didn't want a 3D with realistic rendering, natural lighting, or perfect hair. I tried something else, a more stylised animation. I made the film I would have liked to watch when I was little!



CAST & CREW SHEET

Director

Carlo Vogele

Scriptwriters

Carlo Vogele & Isabelle Andrivet

Artistic director

Edouard Cour

Composer

André Dziezuk

Production by

Iris Productions (LU)

Rezo Productions (FR)

In co-production with

Iris Films (BE)

Proximus (BE)

Belga Productions (BE)

With the support of

Film Fund Luxembourg

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And

Centre du Cinéma et de
l'Audiovisuel de la Fédération

Wallonie-Bruxelles

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In association with

CNC

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Programme Europe créative

MEDIA de l'Union Européenne

With the support of

Tax Shelter du Gouvernement

fédéral de Belgique

Via

Belga Films Fund

International sales

Bac Films

Producers

Nicolas Steil

Jean-Michel Rey

Coproducer

Fabrice Delville

Associate producer

Tanguy Dekeyser

Line producer

Katarzyna Ozga

Production manager

Barbara Bernini

Studios

CG-Lux (LU)

Mikros Liège (BE)

Watt Frame (FR)

Zeilt Productions (LU)

Director assistant

François Debatty

Storyboard supervisor

Alexandre Arnold

Background supervisor

Michel Pisson

Modeling supervisor

Philippe Steinkamp

Layout supervisor

Manu Batot

Texturing & Lookdev 3D supervisor

Gilles Flammang

Rigging 3D supervisor

Jérôme Drese

Animation supervisor

Samuel Rozier

Lighting & Rendering supervisor

Thibaut Couwenberg

Compositing supervisor

Philippe Frère

Film editor

Michel Dimmer

Sound editors

Quentin Collette

Yves Renard

Re-recording mixers

Philippe Charbonnel

& Patrick Hubart

Color artist

Peter Bernaers

English voices

Ariane - Madeleine Smith

Thesaeus - Mark Irrons

Daedalus - Peter Russel

Icarus child - Albert Atack

Icare teenager - Isaac Rouse

Pasiphae - Ella Leyers

Minos - Mark Irons

Asterion - Mark Irons

Length

76'

Format

HD (ratio 16/9 – 1920/1080 pixels)

Animation technique

2D/3D – 24 fps

