

Coleman, Merete Maja

Adaptation and Photo illustrations of Hans Christian Anderson's children's story: "The Bog King's Daughter"

Faculty Mentors: John Telford and Paul Adams, Photography Department

Hans Christian Anderson is one of the most beloved children's writers of all times. His stories have symbolic and often religious meaning, unfortunately because of the length and language of them many go unnoticed by children and adults. Photography is a powerful media of communication. Very rarely is it used to illustrate children's stories. For this project I wanted to rewrite one of Hans Christian Anderson's stories and illustrate it with photographs. I chose the story, "The Bog King's Daughter". "The Bog King's Daughter is about a daughter's love for her dying father, how her love for him leads her to the other end of the world, where she bears a child whose conversion to Christ and love becomes the cure for her grandfather.

When I first began this project I met with a children's story teller and writer, Rose Marie Howard, and asked her if she would rewrite this interesting tale. Together we decided what parts should be edited. We decided to edit many of the tangents and scenic descriptions. We also decided on the scenes in the story that would be accented and brought to the viewer's attention. We wanted to continue with the symbolism of the daughter and the lotus flower and its medicinal value to the grandfather. Another aspect we debated on was if we should continue with the Catholic undertone in the story or add our own religion to it. We decided to make it religiously universal and keep the symbolic references to Christ. After we both understood the basic direction and mood we wanted to take this story I left the writing to Rose Marie. We decided to report our progress to each other every 2-4 weeks.

I then began work on the time consuming task of illustrating. The first thing I did was to outline the story and find scenes where change was occurring, or an important part in the telling of the story was happening. I chose twelve scenes to illustrate. I then sketched out in detail the composition, lighting, and costume of each scene. I wrote a detailed list of the locations, costumes, characters, props, and lighting I would need in order to create what I had envisioned. I began scouting out locations and researching costumes, props, and designs of Vikings and Egyptians, the two places where the story would take place. I also found various different people who could pose as my characters for this story.

Earlier I had tried to photograph this project in the studio, but was not pleased with the results. I decided to do everything on location, with a generator and lights if needed. If I could not find the necessary location I would recreate it with props and costume. I made a schedule of when each image needed to be made, allowing more time for the challenging images. I allowed myself a week to four weeks before photographing to get the location ready, the props together, the costume made, and lighting decided on. Many times I would experiment with the lighting beforehand to make sure it would create the desired effect.

Most of the images I created were quite challenging for me technically and creatively. I wanted to keep them consistent to each other and represent the symbolism in the story at the same time. From what I had envisioned I created the costumes, and props, often times borrowing or renting,

and when necessary, making them myself. I had a few difficulties working around the model's schedules. Often times I would have to condense two or three photo shoots into one day, which proved to be quite tiring. I also had some difficulties with the weather not cooperating with me. For example, snowing when it should not, or blowing over my lights and breaking some equipment. Fortunately, I did not run into any major catastrophes. I think that it paid off to have carefully planned out every detail of the images. All the Photographs turned out how I had envisioned them and I am pleased with the results.

I am now in the process of post production. I am editing the images I have photographed, picking the ones that best communicate the story. I am also changing some of the color and fixing minor details in Photoshop. I will be done with the digital editing of the images and the Rose Marie will be done with the rewriting by mid January 2004. After we are finished we will hand over our work to a Graphic Designer who will then pick out the type and layout for the story in a children's book format. Once the Graphic Designer has created the layout, I will print the book and bind it. I will then pick three of the images to print larger and frame them. The framed images and the book will be on display in the Harris Fine Arts Center the month of April 2004. After this exhibit I will be sending the manuscript to various publishers who would be interested in this type of a project.

It has been most interesting and rewarding to work on this project and I have not only learned how to work with other creators, but have learned how to visually tell a story.



A scene from the story where the daughter is captured by the Bog King