

The bands Caandides and Iñigo Montoya ! have two things in common : first of all they'll both be giving us the pleasure of their performances this weekend during the Lumen, secondly they both have collaborated with the graphic design duo Zeugl. Here is a joint interview about image, music and DIY.

Muzrs : How did the musicians in Caandides and Iñigo Montoya ! meet with Zeugl ?

Théo (Caandides) : Actually, Gabriel and Lolita (Zeugl) have been part of the Caandides project from the beginning. They somewhat started their visual participation at the time we started writing music.

Gabriel (Zeugl) : Caandides' musicians are childhood friends. They started making music, we were studying graphic design, the collaboration happened naturally.

Théo : The starting point was a party at Dylan's (another Caandides' member) parents' place in November 2009. Gabriel and Lolita suggested projecting some animations they had been working on onto us. It looked awesome so we also did it at the following gigs when we could. This experimental and spontaneous side got us excited.

Quentin (Iñigo Montoya !) : We got to know Zeugl at the time we were beginning the project. We wanted a strong visual identity and we knew their work for Caandides.

Lolita (Zeugl) : Our collaboration with Caandides meant we got approached by other artists for record covers and music videos, and so we created the Zeugl entity.

Muzrs : Caandides introduce themselves as a five person band : three musicians and two graphic designers. How come ?

Théo : Caandides is a project that I started alone with song drafts that we then developed together.

Lolita : In a way Caandides was first thought of as a collective. Theo was writing his songs and he recruited musicians and graphic designers to make it into a total project. But with our roles being well separated, I would say that Caandides is a long term collaboration between musicians and graphic designers.

Théo : They eventually took over our DIY system : we would make our own flyers, our photos, etc. Zeugl joining allowed us to go towards more polished productions, while keeping an in-house mindset.

Muzrs : How does the collaboration work from a creative point of view ?

Lolita : Very differently between Caandides and Iñigo. Caandides' musicians are very much involved into the image making and we created a visual identity for each release (EP or album), each time almost starting from scratch. With Iñigo we are on more professional terms : we have been hired for a lasting visual identity and we were given free reign for the creative aspect.

Quentin : It is true that in Iñigo, we work as a team, with specific roles allocated to everyone. Therefore, we wanted the graphic design to be given to a single entity to

ensure an artistic coherence on stage, on the records and throughout the music videos. Ultimately, only one music video was not made by Zeugl but by friends of them. And we didn't even give them any directions. They work on their side, show us some images to explain the idea, a story board for the video and it's gotten underway. At the end we give them some feedback but it's usually quite light.

Lolita : It is also important to point out that Iñigo have very figurative lyrics which we used as a starting point for the music videos, whereas Caandides' music is much more abstract. Théo once mentioned the notion of 'mantra', and I believe it's spot on. So we need more of a discussion with the musicians.

Muzrs : How did the process work for Caandides' debut album, for which you have instigated a whole narrative and graphic concept ?

Gabriel : It was quite long, the whole process almost lasted two years. Théo already had a precise idea of the themes he wanted to tackle, particularly the topic of traveling and of cartography. But since Théo is very indecisive, there were a lot of iterations ! (laughs) At the beginning he gave us keywords, such as 'morbid tropical', and some elements that reminded him of that atmosphere. And afterwards, he stumbled upon a sketch we made for another cover, a pixelated map, and he liked it.

Théo : Indeed, I sent them a list of words that seemed to express the tracks' aesthetics in terms of ambiance and colour scheme. Later on, I had an inspiration while reading an article about this tiny island close to Trinidad, where a Spanish ship sought and photographed a UFO in 1958. The story alone encompassed all the words I previously selected hence I got them started on that, they pushed the idea further by creating a system of coloured layers for each one of the tracks, etc.

Gabriel : We wanted to make a graphical system so that the different pieces would resonate with each other while making a coherent whole. The point was also to have something to decipher on the cover, the same way you can decipher a map.

Lolita : Caandides make quite complex music so it made sense to create an enigmatic artwork comprising codes, elements to figure out, this anecdote about the island...

Muzrs : Zeugl, you mostly work on music projects (Moodoïd, L'impératrice, Amarillo, ...). Is it from chance meetings or by artistic choice ?

Gabriel : To me, music is just another material, an information to translate and work on. But a strong point for working in the music sphere is that we are much freer from a creative point of view.

Lolita : As far as I am concerned, I have a more music-loving approach. During high-school my dream was to be a graphic designer for music ! And facing the realities of the job I noticed that music was indeed the field that let you experiment the most. Musicians are usually more open-minded and cultivated clients compared to an average company. There is also the ethical question that matters quite a lot for us : music is a relatively sane activity compared to other industries. However, we only work with bands whose music and process we appreciate.

Muzrs : You also perform live projections. How does that work ?

Lolita : We build our own programs that we animate live. It's a bit cobbled together but it works ! On the other hand it's quite a huge commitment and a lot of work : on top

of the graphic design, the live aspect requires that we know the set and that we have rehearsed with the band beforehand. Consequently, we have only worked on that with Caandides and Iñigo Montoya ! so far.

Gabriel : The starting idea was to project onto the band so that it merges into one unique mood. We actually wanted to go against the cult of personality that reigns within the music industry.

Lolita : We also take into account that they are two emerging bands (Caandides & Iñigo), hence they have little resources. Therefore we keep simple set-ups, easily transportable from one venue to another. In the end, just the fact that we want to install the projector in front of the band rather than on top is already problematic for some venues.

Quentin : By the way, we got in touch with Zeugl especially for this set-up. It fitted us well since we're not the most sociable band on stage, and the visual show allows us to deflect the public's attention, so we can all just concentrate on the music.

Théo : In our case, it was also motivated by the desire to avoid the lighting system of the venues, that I personally always loathed.

Gabriel : We also worked on shows with lighting only, Lolita having learned some basics on the job. But our graphic background means that that we mostly focus on minimalist atmospheres instead of using tons of effects.

Muzrs : Does it seem important to you for artists to pay attention the visual aspect of their identity ?

Lolita : I feel like it's a requirement of small indie bands especially. Likely because the record labels are looking for that before signing them.

Quentin : Beyond the artwork, it's becoming more and more significant to have an identity that sticks with your storytelling. Music is not enough anymore : you need a history, origins, a journey.

Gabriel : I believe that it all existed previously, but today as record labels are lacking in money the bands are asked to develop that aspect on their own.

Théo : The coherence between the musical mood and the visual mood seems of great importance nowadays, you need a concept. I am thinking of Jaques' tonsure for example, a recurring component that you can see on him during a show, in the photos, in his music videos and on his album cover. It attracts the eye.

Lolita : It's a retail process after all, you offer the public a personality instead of just music.

Muzrs : Is there be a link to made with the Internet, which is now the main broadcasting vessel of music ?

Lolita : I recently watched a video of Jessica Helfhand, a design critic, about people's branding on the Internet. I believe you can extend it to anyone, including bands : we are constantly marketing ourselves, simply by choosing a facebook profile picture. Nowadays, through the Internet, we are continually in representation in the public space, and that triggered a reflexion around visual identity. Most likely, that's what makes the music industry professionals ask for a strong identity and personality from small bands.

Gabriel : And what I grieve the most in all of this is that the music industry's pressure makes some bands force themselves to create an identity that is not theirs.