



TIM BURTON DIDACTICS

Introduction

Timothy Walter Burton was born in Burbank, California, on August 25, 1958, and raised in a sunny middle-class neighborhood of the city. He never felt at home there, and so—self-reliant and possessed of a restless imagination—he consoled himself with the pleasures of drawing and humor and an interest in visual media that he indulged by feeding on the most accessible and colorful forms of popular entertainment. In newspaper comics, advertising, greeting cards, children’s literature, toys, animated cartoons, monster movies, science fiction films, carnival sideshows, performance art, and holiday rituals, including the art of the Mexican Day of the Dead, Burton found the subjects and themes that he has explored in feature films, shorts, and commercials and on television and the Web since 1982. Through his work he has established a recognizable style and aesthetic that are revered today by an international audience.

Burton is known almost exclusively for his work for the screen. This exhibition provides unprecedented access to the entire range of his creative output, including his sketchbooks, concept art, drawings, paintings, photographs, and amateur films. The full array of Burton’s achievements demonstrates for the first time his kinship with a generation of contemporary pop painters and illustrators—many, like himself, with roots in Southern California—who have embraced the iconography, representational styles, and narrative forms of popular culture.

1958-1976

Surviving Burbank

Burton survived his feeling of alienation from small-town suburban life on the strength of his imagination. He has used his childhood in Burbank as a resource for much of the work that he has produced over the course of his career.

1977-1984

Beautifying Burbank

Burton's talent matured during two years of study at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) and four years working as an animator at the Walt Disney Company. A number of his signature motifs and stylistic traits emerged during this period, such as his creature-based notions of character, his use of masks and body modification, and his exploration of the relationship between childhood and adulthood.

1985-

Beyond Burbank

Burton's career blossomed through his work in feature films. *Pee-wee's Big Adventure* (1985), *Beetlejuice* (1988), *Batman* (1989), and *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) made him a brand name before his sixth feature, *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), was released. In this phase of his creative life, rewarding professional collaborations have helped bring his personal vision to the screen.