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Candidate session number			
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Examination session (May or November)	May	Year	2013

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: Visual Arts
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Title of the extended essay: The Evolution of Tove Jansson's
Moomin - story Illustrations

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The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

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Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

Tove Jansson's Moomins are famous for animation series. She approached her topic from particular point of view, how artist's life affects her style. She visited often in local Art Museum Moominvalley. I believe she did a very good piece of work.

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To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

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Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Achievement level

Criteria	Examiner 1	maximum	Examiner 2	maximum	Examiner 3
A research question	1	2		2	
B introduction	1	2		2	
C investigation	2	4		4	
D knowledge and understanding	2	4		4	
E reasoned argument	2	4		4	
F analysis and evaluation	2	4		4	
G use of subject language	2	4		4	
H conclusion	1	2		2	
I formal presentation	3	4		4	
J abstract	2	2		2	
K holistic judgment	2	4		4	
Total out of 36	20				

The Evolution of Tove Jansson's Moomin-story Illustrations

Extended Essay

Visual Arts

May 2013

2589 words

Abstract

Tove Jansson's art has always fascinated me with its versatility in style. I decided to focus specifically on her Moomin illustrations because there is ample information on the subject and there is even a museum dedicated to them in the city I live in. This led me to form the research question; what are the changes in Tove Jansson's Moomin-story illustrations? This includes illustrations Jansson made for the Moomin books, picture books, and Moomin comic strips.

The first Moomin story was published in 1945 in the form of a book and the last in 1977 in the form of a picture book. I divided this essay into decades, starting from the 40's and ending with the 70's, analyzing the style of the illustrations in each. I also studied Jansson's personal life to explain the various styles and changes. The majority of the information was gathered from books published by the Tampere art gallery and a book about Tove Jansson written by Boel Westin, the only person who has gained access to Jansson's personal archive. A Wikipedia source was used for a summarized biography of Jansson.

The Moomin illustrations were clearly affected by Jansson's personal life, which can be expected since she worked on them over a period of roughly three decades. During the 40's and beginning of the 50's the illustrations were dramatic and exciting, as was her life during World War II and the rise of her successful career. In the end of the 50's there was a clear change towards a more realistic and mature style as she begins to long for peace from the hectic world of a celebrity.

Contents

Introduction	1
Biography	2
Moomintroll	3
Geography	3
1940's	4
1950's	6
1960's	9
1970's	11
Conclusion	12
References and Bibliography	13

Introduction

Most people who have visited Finland would know the Moomins, one of the most famous series of Finnish children's stories that have become popular amongst all ages. Tove Jansson wrote and illustrated thirteen Moomin books, which have been translated into over forty languages¹, four picture books, and countless comic strips.

The worldwide popularity developed into an international Moomin-zeal. The first wave started in the 1950's when the Moomin books began to appear elsewhere in Europe and the Moomin comic strips in the popular English newspaper *The Evening News*.²

The Moomins are creatures that live happily in a beautiful seaside location called Moominvalley and hibernate during the cold Nordic winters. The Moomin tales can be thought of as a depiction of society and many of its characters as satires of different types of people within society. For example, the core Moomin family consists of Moominmamma, the perfect mother figure who always carries a pair of dry socks in her purse, Moominpappa, the father who has reached a mid-life crisis and is longing for adventure, and Moomintroll, the naïve, slightly spoiled son.

We will first go through a brief biography of Jansson and separate overviews of the changes in the protagonist Moomintroll and the changes in the depiction of the setting, then move on to study her life events and their effects on her illustrations from the 1940's to the 1970's.

Today many children have become familiar with the Moomins through the animation series and other products made by Japanese artists, which is beside the focus of the research question and therefore will not be covered in this essay. Only illustrations made by Tove Jansson herself will be discussed.

¹ *Moominvalley 20 years* (p. 14)

² Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä* (p. 229)

Biography

Tove Jansson was a Swedish-speaking Finnish novelist, comic author, illustrator, and painter. Jansson was born on August 9th, 1914 into a family of artists. Her father Viktor Jansson was a sculptor, her mother Signe Hammarsten-Jansson was a graphic designer, her younger brother Per Olov Jansson is a photographer, and her youngest brother Lars Jansson was an author and cartoonist. Though she is best known as the author of the Moomin books, but she considered herself to be a painter first and foremost.



Image 1: Tove Jansson, photo by Per Olov Jansson

Jansson attended the Stockholm University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, the Graphic School of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts, and L'École d'Adrien Holy and L'École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. She had multiple partners and lovers throughout her life, but spent the rest of her life with graphic artist Tuulikki Pietilä after meeting her in 1955. Jansson had a studio in Helsinki, but the couple spent nearly thirty summers in Klovharu, a small island near Porvoo, where they built a house. Jansson was very protective of her privacy and in her older age rarely gave interviews or made public appearances. Her numerous awards include the Pro Finlandia Medal, Mercuri International's bronze apple, The Swedish Academy Award, The American-Scandinavian Foundation Honorary Cultural Award, and the H.C. Andersen -medal.

In the 90's Jansson was diagnosed with both lung and breast cancer, and in the spring of 2000 she suffered from severe cerebral hemorrhage. After spending a year at a hospital, she died on June 27th, 2001 at the age of 86.³

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tove_Jansson

Moomintroll

In the early 30's Jansson made aquarelle paintings of sinister landscapes, where Moomintrolls are portrayed as evil-looking black creatures with sharp horn-like ears and red eyes. During this decade the original white Moomintroll began appearing in several of Jansson's other illustrations with the name of Snork, and for a while it served as an appendix to her signature in her illustrations in the political *Garm* magazine. Jansson used the Moomintroll character to eventually create the Moomin-stories. She added family members with identical features, who can later be distinguished from each other by certain accessories they wear. Over time, the features of the characters developed to become rounder in shape, and overall more appealing in appearance. The nose becomes shorter and the eyes move closer together. The characters also grow in size in relation to their surroundings.^{4 5}



Image 2: 1934,
aquarelle



Image 3: 1945,
ink on paper

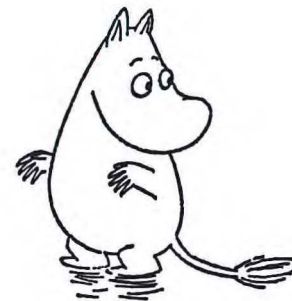


Image 4: 1957,
ink on paper

Geography

The setting of the Moomin stories went through a very evident change. The Moomins live in a paradise-like place called Moominvalley which is located safely in between a mountain range and a sea. In the first Moomin books the setting is illustrated in a fashion similar to the romantic style, magical and surreal. The natural environment looks exotic with large flowers, fruits and palm trees. Jansson used strong contrasts between light and shadow, which enhanced the mysterious and dramatic mood of her illustrations. In the

⁴ *Moominvalley 20 years* (p. 39-38)

⁵ *Tove Jansson: Muistonäyttely* (p. 76)

later books Moominvalley becomes more realistic and defined with coniferous forest and rocky seashore, which are clear characteristics of a Nordic landscape. This change began during the time Jansson herself began to spend increasing amounts of time on an island near the coast of Finland where she ended up spending many summers with Tuulikki Pietilä.⁶



Image 5: *The Moomins and the Great Flood*, 1948, wash technique and ink

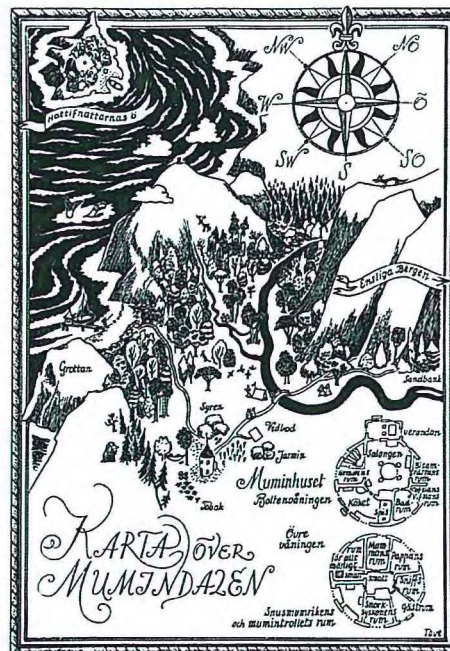


Image 6: *Finn Family Moomintroll*, 1948, ink on paper

1940's

Creating the Moomin tales was Jansson's method of escapism during the war.

[Jansson] describes the process as an escape to a world where everything was "friendly and safe", a diversion called escapism, an escape from reality to the world of childhood (Westin, 2007: p. 158).

The first two Moomin novels, *The Moomins and the Great Flood* (1945) and *Comet in Moominland* (1946) were of epic adventures. Jansson illustrated these two books with tinted drawings in ink by using the wash technique for priming, which enabled her to create different effects of light and darkness. The gloomy desperation of the Second

⁶ *Moominvalley: From tales to a museum collection* (p. 24)

World War, during which the books were written, is reflected in the illustrations and conveyed through this technique. The use of dark shadows, especially in the larger images, gives a very dramatic feel and expresses strong fear and anxiety. Images of small helpless creatures stranded in treetops surrounded by a flood in *The Moomins and the Great Flood* and refugees escaping the destruction of their land in *Comet in Moominland* are scenes that can be directly linked to the war.⁷



Image 7: A cover illustration for *Comet in Moominland*, 1946, aquarelle and marker pen, 28 x 20,2

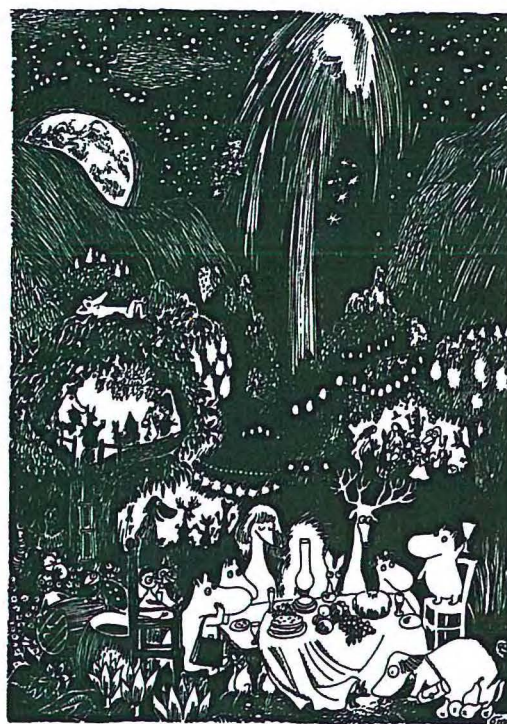


Image 8: *Finn Family Moomintroll*, 1948, ink on paper

Image 7 is a great example of the effect of the war in her illustrations. The fiery comet is like a bomb coming down. It is approaching from above, casting long shadows and the sharp rocks and the wrecked ship remind us of ruins and destruction. The use of complementary colors, the cool green at the bottom emphasizes the flaming orange at the

⁷ Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä* (p.154)

top. *Finn Family Moomintroll* was published in 1948. It is about a magical adventure, continuing a similar theme as the previous books. The vast amount of detail in the illustrations brings the excitement of the story into the illustrations. Image 8 is more joyful and festive in atmosphere. After all, in 1948 there must have been more hope and joy in the artist as the war is coming to an end. The moon and the large shooting particle are rising up, opposite to image 7, symbolizing hopes for the future and moving forward. The image also illustrates a celebration and togetherness. Perhaps the most common elements in her earlier works are contrasts and detail, which can both be seen in these images.

1950's

As a new decade came along, the Moomins skyrocketed to fame. A picture book called *The Book about Moomin, Mybble and Little My* (1952), and two Moomin books *Moominsummer Madness* (1954) and *Moominland Midwinter* (1957) were released during the 50's. The first Moomin comic strip appeared in 1954 in the Evening News, which was the world's biggest newspaper with its over 12 million subscribers, and two years later the comic was published in twenty countries. Jansson thought the comics would make the Moomins more widely known, and her prediction was proved absolutely correct. Comics require characters to be visually distinguishable and unvarying, and the appearance of the Moomins does not change from this point on. Moominpappa now always wears a hat, Moominmamma wears an apron, and Moomintroll is the only Moomin with no regular accessory on clothing, representing the original Moomin character.⁸

⁸ Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä* (p. 229-249)

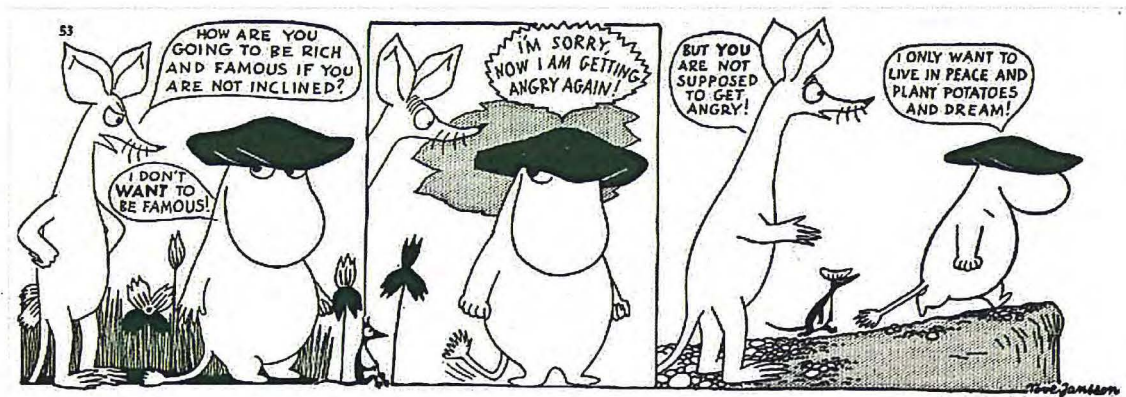


Image 9: Comic strip

The illustrations in her first picture book *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and Little My* (1952) is colorful and exciting. It is constructed so that on every page there is a hole that reveals something from the previous page and the next page, and it has a color scheme that is interesting and unexpected. The text is in Jansson's own handwriting and is styled to match each situation in the story, making it visually attractive and unique. Jansson drew her inspiration for this book from the famous fauvist painter Henri Matisse (1869-1954)⁹ and his decoupage, or cut-out, technique.¹⁰ The style seen in both Matisse's and Jansson's work (images 10 and 11) is very two-dimensional with minimal use of detail and shadow, and the colors are bright and pure, which is appealing especially to children.

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Matisse

¹⁰ Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä* (p. 233)



Image 10: Henri Matisse. *La Tristesse du roi*, 1952.



Image 11: Jansson. *The Book about Moomin, Mybble and Little My*

After *Comet in Moominland* Jansson abandoned her previous tinting technique because of the crude printing technology of the time and switched into simple ink drawings, which were also less time consuming. She used an ink pen with different sizes of nibs, and different line networks to create light, shade and dynamic movement.¹¹ During the late 50's, Jansson was stressed out from the sudden workload that came along with the success. Having to create new comics on a regular basis was no longer enjoyable, and she no longer had time for true self-expression, which for her was painting. She wanted to do something different, and the new and scary winter described in *Moominland Midwinter* is much like the sudden and stressful time in her life. Her stories begin to show more psychological conflicts instead of the external ones in her earlier books.

The change has been characterized as a move from childhood to adulthood, play to work, paradise to everyday, idyll to un-idyll. In *Moominland Midwinter*, the eternal summer of Moominvalley ends, and its security, which catastrophes have interrupted, now dissolves into psychological tensions (*Moominvalley 20 years*, 2009: p. 51).

¹¹ *Moominvalley 20 years* (p.48)

In *Moominland Midwinter* Jansson used the scraping technique so that the motif is scratched from a black background, the result being white lines on black. The all-black background proves to be strongly effective, suiting the gloomy mood of the book and reflecting Jansson's depression.¹² As seen in image 12, Jansson creates light by scratching small lines of white. The denser the lines, the more intense or bright the light appears. By using pure white on pitch black, the contrast between light and darkness becomes very strong. The illustrations are now more realistic and remind us more of our human world. The previously lively and homely Moominhouse is depicted in a menacing way.

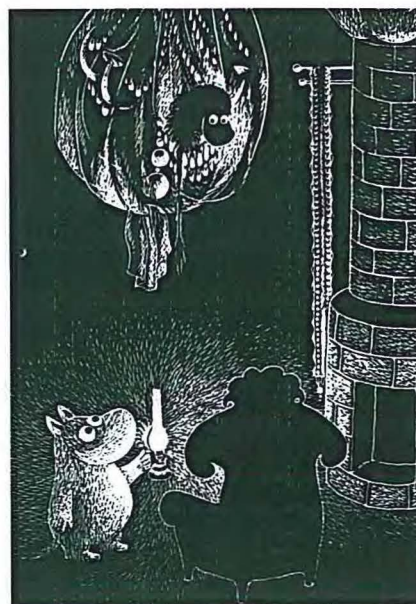


Image 12: 1957, scraper board

1960's

When Jansson felt the "Moomin fever" grew too intense and was taking over her life, she decided to stop drawing Moomin comics for good and began to paint again. Wanting a fresh start, she renovated her studio and made it more organized, minimalist and serene. She has also settled into a steady relationship with Tuulikki Pietilä who she spends the rest of her life with. Her second picture book *Who Will Comfort Toffle?* was published in 1960. This book was about all the other characters, without a single appearance of Moomins themselves. Though the style is similar to the colorful cut-out technique of *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and Little My*, the illustrations are now more clean and simple. Images are stripped down from everything extra, with broad surfaces, flat shapes, and no black outlines. The simplified environment emphasizes the characters and creates a more serene atmosphere.¹³ As seen in image 13, the shapes are plain and unadorned,

¹² Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä* (p. 286)

¹³ Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä* (p. 302-308)

and there is no shading. Here, and in many of Jansson's other illustrations, the use of complementary colors (black and white, orange and blue) brings emphasis to the different elements of the picture. This makes the otherwise simple picture interesting and eye-catching, which is also an important aspect of children's picture books.



Image 13: *Who Will Comfort Toffle?*

Jansson felt she was no longer accepted as painter, that her true self was hidden behind the famous “Moominmamma”, the mother of the Moomins. In 1961 Jansson wrote in a letter to a friend that she has noticed that she is “growing up”¹⁴. A year later she publishes a new book *The Invisible Child*, which is a collection of short stories and also focuses more on the characters on the sidelines, though the Moomin family plays a distinct part in the book. In her drawings she uses more expressive and symbolic elements and broken, swift lines that make them look like raw sketches. “The more closer and personal the things the text deals with, the more distant the drawing style becomes”¹⁵. The reason behind this may be that it was difficult for the artist to illustrate her own thoughts and emotions in a clear and representational way.

¹⁴ Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä* (p. 319)

¹⁵ *Moominvalley 20 years* (p. 54)

1970's

Having written the last official Moomin book *Moominland November* (1970) and left her goodbyes to the Moomins, Jansson focuses on writing novels and other texts for adults and therefore leaves illustrating to the side. She publishes one final Moomin story in 1977, *The Dangerous Journey*, in the form of a picture book. The tableau-like illustrations are more significant than the text. Unlike in any of her previous books, Jansson created the pictures before writing the text. The book is a piece of art done by Jansson's painter-self. The illustrations were made using aquarelles and deep, full colors.¹⁶ Though the dominating color scheme is dark and earthy with plenty of black and grey, there still remains the element of playfulness in the splashes of color placed here and there. The colors and the sharp jagged shapes are generally atypical for most children's picture books and therefore the book and its illustrations can be appreciated by all ages. This is an important aspect of Jansson's work in general, which makes her an exceptional and admirable artist.

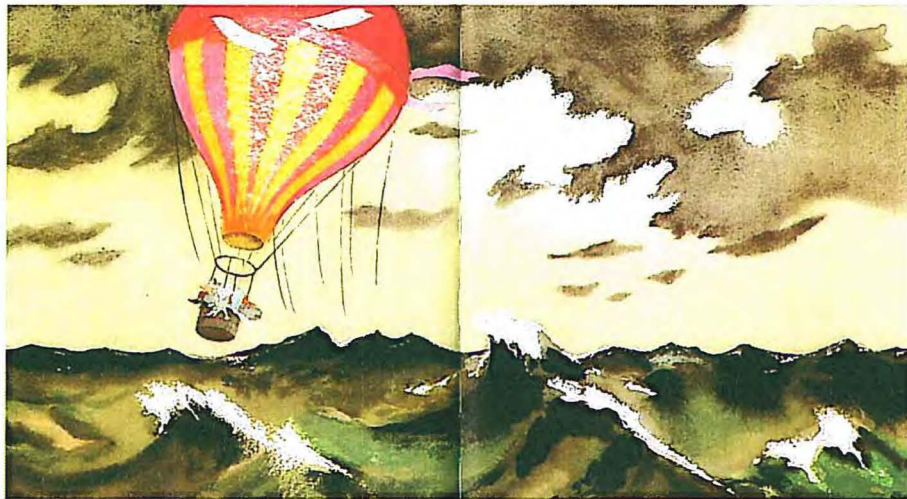


Image 14: 1960, aquarelle

¹⁶ Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä* (p. 419-423)

Conclusion

Tove Jansson was a sensitive artist whose life revolved more or less around her work. She lived through many eventful eras in history, which have affected her art and transformed her style throughout time. The Moomins were a significant part of her career, covering over three decades of her life, thus this continual transformation can be detected in her Moomin illustrations.

In her twenties and thirties she did not know what was to come, she fell in love several times and worked hard.¹⁷ The illustrations then were dramatic and surreal, depicting adventures and excitement. This was accomplished via strong contrasts, a vast amount of detail, and the tinting technique which enabled her to create and different lighting effects. The setting was portrayed as a secret undefined world with exotic elements, a paradise. The characters themselves first had long noses and small eyes. They reached their final defined and unvarying appearance with more rotund and attractive features when Jansson began creating comic strips in the 50's.

As she grew older her illustrations became more simplistic and realistic in depiction. She leaves the Moomin comics behind and focuses more on painting and writing books for adults. Her longing for peace and freedom began to show more and more. *Moominland Midwinter* creates a watershed between the younger and older work. Her second picture book is stripped away from any extra details and the ink drawings in the Moomin books have expressionist qualities. The setting becomes more realistic, clearly Nordic and similar to the rocky coast of Finland where Jansson lived. The final picture book was published after a significant period in time from the previous one. It is a revisit to the world of Moomins and a demonstration of Jansson's skills as a painter, combining elements from her older and newer works.

¹⁷ Westin, *Tove Jansson: Sanat, kuvat, elämä*

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Images

All images used were created by Tove Jansson unless mentioned otherwise.

Image 1: Jansson, Per Olov. <http://www.nimikot.fi/nimikkoseurat/tove-jansson/>

Image 2: The picture archive of the Tampere Art museum, Jari Kuusenaho.

Image 3: *The Moomins and the Great Flood* (1945) p.10

Image 4: *Moominland Midwinter* (1957) p. 30

Image 5: *The Moomins and the Great Flood* (1945) p. 53

Image 6: *Moominvalley 20 years* (2009) p.42

Image 7: *Tove Jansson: Muistonäyttely* (2002) p. 36

Image 8: *Finn Family Moomintroll* (1948) p. 128

Image 9: <http://pantytalks.blogspot.fi/2012/08/artist-of-month-july-tove-jansson.html>

Image 10: Henri Matisse. *La Tristesse du roi*, 1952.

<http://www.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ens-matisse-en/ens-matisse-en.htm>

Image 11: *The Book about Moomin, Mymble and Little My* (1952) p. 21

Image 12: *Moominland Midwinter* (1957) p. 72

Image 13: *Who Will Comfort Toffle?* (1960) p. 13-14

Image 14: *The Dangerous Journey* (1977) p. 20-21

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