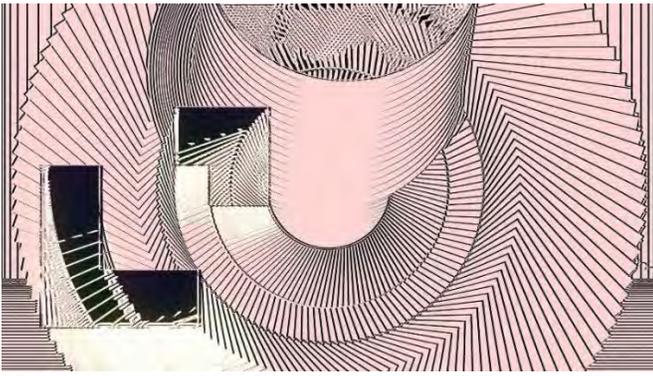


**ASIFA**  
THE INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION ASSOCIATION  
July 2019



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SF, CA 94122



**MAX HATTLER'S *DIVISIONAL ARTICULATIONS*** OUR SPRING ANIMATION CELEBRATION AT CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO WAS FULL OF UNIQUE WORKS After the show one person said over dinner that it was better than last year's National Film Board of Canada's program! Although the Film Board showed *Animal Behavior*, a wonderful work that received an Academy Award nomination, nobody at dinner could recall what else was shown. On the other hand I suspect that a year from now people will recall some of the 28 works we showed.

What we discussed, over an inexpensive banquet of Indian/Pakistani food, was not only the quality of the films, but also the rich variety of subjects, styles and the techniques used. *Stray Cat Ah Q* by Mulan Fu from NYU was full of emotional feelings and several people felt it was the best film in the show. Another person felt Bill Plympton's *Sex and Violence 3* was the best film as it had the loudest and longest laughter and his drawing skills are impressive. *The Faithful Fish* by Atelier Collectif Zorobabel in Belgium (music by Nik Phelps) was also an amusing, well written story done with hinged paper cut outs. Yet another suggestion for that honor was *Dinner Time* by Kate Renshaw-Lewis from CAL Arts. It features really weird, surreal creatures that change in size and shape at will and who enjoy a fine cannibal stew. It has what I assume is one of their smiling babies swimming in a pot on a stove ready to boil over. Kate describes the film as being "about the gender roles and power dynamics in the nuclear family." Somebody said that the film was far too weird to win, but it did win an award.

Two films shown deserve special awards as standing out during these troubled time as they speak out in sophisticated ways about controversial issues. Ken Kimmelman's *Brushstrokes* was made for the United Nations and it shows the "ridiculousness of prejudice." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpsNyWGXO2s> Patrick Smith's *Gun Shop* is an ambiguous understated message that might suggest that guns are cool to a weapons owner, but I assume most people who see it will be reminded there are too many guns in this world. In the film hundreds of guns flash before us in time to a steady drum beat.



**'A MOTHER'S SONG' FROM THE UPCOMING FEATURE 'MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH MARRIAGE' BY SIGNE BAUMANE**

There were several films that were praised for artistic achievement. The excerpt *Mother's Song* from Signe Baumann's upcoming second feature has impressive 3D sets, excellent mood lighting and a professional sounding woman's chorus on the soundtrack. *The Blossoming Wish* by Jenny Li from Parsons School of Design was a journey through a forest in the spring with flower petals floating in the air, lovely multiplane landscapes and other lovely visual effects. The four entries from J.J. Sedelmaier's company are always a welcomed treat, especially his fun to watch anime style commercial for NFL Youth. Max Hattler's *Divisional Articulations* is an exceptional, highly refined abstract work of 2D computer fine art that I've enjoyed watching several times (see it at [www.divisionalarticulations.com](http://www.divisionalarticulations.com)). I also enjoyed seeing the six films from CALArts, works that show how each individual is exploring a personal approach to their thoughts about how to express what abstract computer generated work can be. Each developed creative and interesting solutions.

Two films shown deserve special awards as standing out during these troubled time as they speak out in sophisticated ways about controversial issues. Ken Kimmelman's *Brushstrokes* was made for the United Nations and it shows the "ridiculousness of prejudice." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpsNyWGXO2s> Patrick Smith's *Gun Shop* is an ambiguous understated message that might suggest that guns are cool to a weapons owner, but I assume most people who see it will be reminded there are too many guns in this world. In the film hundreds of guns flash before us in time to a steady drum beat.

The show was full of creative talent including a stop-motion film using balloons that you inflate (by Max Landman). There were other impressive student films from SF State, from the City Colleges of San Francisco and Berkeley, and from BAYCAT, an afterschool workshop for young people. The show opened with a delightful two minute *Baby Shark* with artwork and music by Mrs. Harrington's 4<sup>th</sup> Graders at the Dianne

Feinstein Elementary School. The program ran almost two hours long and over three hours of material was submitted.

**And the winners are:**

**BEST IN SHOW:** *Stray Cat Ah Q* by Mulan Fu, NYU.  
<https://vimeo.com/338140442>

**BEST STUDENT FILM:** *Dinner Time* by Kate Renshaw-Lewis, CalArts  
There was a tie for second by *The Blossoming Wish* by Jenny Li (Parsons School of Design), [www.popularyoutube.com](http://www.popularyoutube.com). *Where I was Born* by Jungmin Cha (CALArts) and *Time to Go* by Chloe Mitchel (SFSU).

**BEST PROFESSIONAL FILM:** *Gun Shop* by Patrick Smith. Coming in second is Ken Kimmelman's *Brushstrokes*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpsNyWGXO2s>

**BEST INDEPENDENT FILM:** *The Faithful Fish* by Atelier Collectif Zorobabel. Coming in as a close second was Bill Plympton's *Sex and Violence III*  
Nancy Phelps tells us "This year Zorobabel completed their last production as a teaching collective after 20 years. Now the original founders will create their own work under the name of Zorobabel. They are quite well-known in Europe and have produced many well-known award winning films."



**SUZAN PITT, WHO LED THE WAY FOR WOMEN BEING RECOGNIZED AS GREAT ANIMATORS, HAS DIED** She was 76 and had cancer. Sadly she couldn't attend Zagreb this year as she was being honored with a retrospective screening, a gallery exhibit of her painted work and was being given their lifetime achievement award. Suzan amazed and shocked the art world with her surreal film *Asparagus* in 1979. The film was shown theatrically with David Lynch's *Eraserhead* for two years at midnight movies. Since then she has completed around a dozen other experimental films which are also quite bold and innovative. Her paintings have been exhibited at NY's Museum of Modern Art, she has created animation for Hector Berlioz's opera *Damnation of Faust* and Mozart's *Magic Flute* and has created large multimedia shows that were exhibited at the Venice Biennale and at

Harvard University. She has taught at Harvard University and CALArts and has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Rockefeller Fellowship, three production grants from the National Endowment of the Arts and other honors. Her films can be seen online.  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/arts/suzan-pitt-wildly-inventive-animation-filmmaker-dies-at-75.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit\\_th\\_190622?campaign\\_id=2&instance\\_id=10344&segment\\_id=14554&user\\_id=03d144b86ab42f60ed4e104b922f44ce&egi\\_id=608000130622](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/arts/suzan-pitt-wildly-inventive-animation-filmmaker-dies-at-75.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_190622?campaign_id=2&instance_id=10344&segment_id=14554&user_id=03d144b86ab42f60ed4e104b922f44ce&egi_id=608000130622)

**PIXAR HAS ANOTHER MAJOR BOX OFFICE HIT**  
The *Hollywood Reporter* called *Toy Story 4* "an entirely wonderful continuation of the series that 24 years ago launched an era in the annals of animation... the same level of wit, imagination and, yes, magic has been summoned to create yet another fully worthy sibling." The writer said for people who feared Disney's owning Pixar would weaken its creative edge will be pleased that hasn't happened. While there were "some subpar sequels (*Cars 2* and *3*, *Monsters University*, *Finding Dory*) and a couple of less-than-stellar one-shots (*Brave*, *The Good Dinosaur*)," the new release carries on the Toy Story franchise's standard for excellence. It is "a story that is fresh and different while remaining at one with what's come before. Walt Disney's best work has always seemed timeless, and this entire series does too."

What do other critics say? The *BBC's* critic says the gorgeous animation and reunion of the band of misfits was "a worthwhile venture." *USA Today's* Brian Truitt finds the film funnier, even hilarious at times. The *Boston Globe's* Ty Burr wrote, "For millennial audiences who've grown up with Woody and the gang over years of *Toy Story* movies, the movies may even seem a minor miracle - proof that faith can be kept in a faithless world."



**PIXAR SHORT 'PURL' WINS BEST IN SHOW AT SIGGRAPH 2019** At SIGGRAPH 2019, opening in LA on July 29, the Electronic Theatre will feature 24

short films. Pixar's *Purl* by Kristen Lester wins best in show. *Purl* stars a ball of wool yarn.

Supinfocom's *The Stained Club* wins the jury award and Supinfocom's *Stuffed* takes the best student film award. There were about 400 submissions and the films selected come from Serbia, New Zealand, Taiwan, Germany, Denmark, Canada, Singapore, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States. See *Purl* at <https://www.shortoftheweek.com/2019/02/05/purl>

**25<sup>th</sup> BRAINWASH MOVIE FESTIVAL July 12, 13, 19, 20. Lots of animation. All events at Nimby, 8410 Amelia Street, Oakland. For program details visit: [www.brainwashm.com](http://www.brainwashm.com)**



**COMING THIS SUMMER, 'PLAYMOBIL THE MOVIE' BASED ON A LINE OF TOYS** It premiered at Anney, but that didn't save it from being panned by the *Hollywood Reporter*. They wrote, "Playmobil, the toys, are recommended for children ages 4 through 12. As for *Playmobil: The Movie*, it's safe to say that anyone who has already reached double digits will find little to enjoy in this generic and lifeless promotional tool from director Lino DiSalvo, who served as head animator on *Frozen* and *Tangled*... It's a tour-de-force of blatant salesmanship that, in narrative terms, comes across as absolute nonsense... It's hard to see what exactly compelled these filmmakers to take on such a dubious enterprise."

**'FUNAN' CAPTURES THE HARROWING REALITIES OF LIFE IN CAMBODIA UNDER THE KHMER ROUGE** Cambodia, April 1975. Chou is a young woman whose everyday world is suddenly upended by the arrival of the Khmer Rouge regime. During the chaos of the forced exile from their home, Chou and her husband are separated from their 4-year-old son, who has been sent to an unknown location. As she navigates her new reality, working in the fields day and night under the careful watch of soldiers, and surviving the small indignities and harrowing realities of the increasingly grim work camps, Chou remains steadfast in her determination to reunite her family -

even if it means risking everything. The film is being mentioned as you may want to see it in the future, or just know that it exists. It opened June 21 at the Roxie so it has probably left the area. GKids is the US distributor.

**SEE A BEAUTIFUL COPY OF 'CARTOONS KICK ASS' ONLINE** a British producer used my book *Forbidden Animation* as inspiration for this unusual X rated documentary. The doc interviews Ralph Bakshi, J.J. Sedelmaier, Jerry Beck, Bill Moritz, me and other experts. For years YouTube had a grainy copy posted. Now a high quality print is available online. Enjoy, if you are interested in learning more about censorship. <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=cartoons+kick+ass&view=detail&mid=6B9B76C1C085F98634C56B9B76C1C085F98634C5&FORM=VIRE>



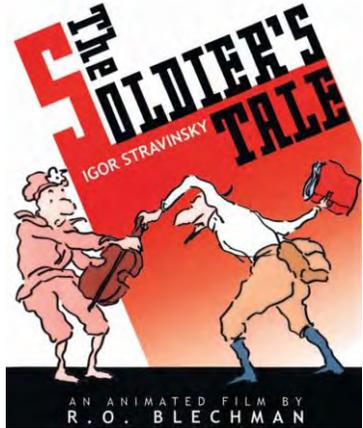
**AT ANNEY DISNEY ANNOUNCES NEW SHOWS FOR DISNEY + WITH 'CHIP 'N' DALE' AND 'MONSTERS AT WORK'** As you probably have noticed Disney is trying hard to promote its Disney+ streaming service coming in November. At Anney they announced they are reviving their not very appealing 'Chip 'n' Dale' cartoon characters, a pair of chipmunks, plus a new show called *Monsters at Work* voiced by Billy Crystal and John Goodman. The new chipmunk toons are being animated by Disney's London-based studio and by Xilam Animation in Paris. They are producing what Disney "calls timeless stories for all members of the family." Disney has also obtained exclusive global streaming rights to BBC Studios popular dog series *Bluey* for its Disney Junior channel and the soon-to-launch SVOD.

**UK HAS DUBIOUS FOR-PROFIT COLLEGES ALMOST AS CORRUPT AS THE LATE TRUMP UNIVERSITY!** *The Guardian* reports that "Pok Wong settled out-of-court with Anglia Ruskin University for false advertising. She received a £61,000 out-of-court settlement for her 'Mickey Mouse degree.' Unfortunately the settlement barely covered her legal costs, tuition fees and the time spent fighting it." Her degree was in business.

Students in the US and in other countries have been lured into taking classes at fly-by-night schools claiming they offer “high-quality” educations and that there are great jobs out there for you. She discovered they are “focused on their own commercial interests rather than those of the students. Their focus is on how to recruit as many students as possible regardless of their resources (or talent).” Our congressional hearings came to that conclusion several years ago and while our government has closed a few of the worst schools that exploited students, others are still in business.

**ACTION PACKED ‘FROZEN 2’ TRAILER** It opens Nov. 22. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suVQt0pfOLc>

**‘KARL COHEN: CARTOON KING’** is a long interview by Doniphan Blair in *CineSource*. [cinesourcemagazine.com/index.php?/site/comments/the\\_cartoon\\_king/#.XQ3CrHdFwa5](https://www.cinesourcemagazine.com/index.php?/site/comments/the_cartoon_king/#.XQ3CrHdFwa5)



## DISCOVERING THE WORLD OF R.O. BLECHMAN by Karl Cohen

When one of our members, Karen Folger Jacobs, said her friend R.O. Blechman had a work in progress that he wanted to submit to our spring animation celebration, his adaptation of Voltaire’s *Candide*, I got excited. Unfortunately it wasn’t possible to download it from Vimeo, but you can see it online. See *Candide* at <https://vimeo.com/338715445>

While this film captures some of the satire and irony of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century work by Voltaire, what fascinated me was realizing how relevant the message in this work-in-progress is to today’s world. People who suspect our nation is headed by a tyrant may see some similarities to this tragic comedy. After all, *Candide* believes in the propaganda fed to him that his country is the best of all possible worlds.



**Who is R.O. Blechman?**

R.O. Blechman has spent decades making people laugh, smile and think. I first became aware of his distinctive style of drawing from seeing his work in the *New Yorker* and have heard praise of his work from friends. Since then I’ve discovered his work is rich and varied and he is more concerned with intelligent content than creating comics and animation that fits into a nice neat category. One work may be satirical and the next might be a serious editorial image or a fun cover for a magazine.

He was born in Brooklyn in 1930, graduated from the High School of Music and Art (NYC) and went to Oberlin College (Ohio). Although he worked as a cartoonist for his college paper, he chose to get a liberal arts education. He majored in history and literature with a minor in art history. In an interview he said at the time he wasn’t thinking seriously about a career as an artist.

After graduating from Oberlin in 1952, Blechman happened to run into a high school friend in a Greyhound bus station. His friend suggested a few people he might contact about work including a publisher named Henry Holt who specializes in publishing seasonal picture books. Creating an illustrated holiday book may sound like too obscure a format to work in, but R.O. did some research and called friends for ideas. Apparently, within a few days he concocted the text and images for his first illustrated book, *The Juggler of Our Lady*, a Christmas retelling of a medieval legend. It was published in 1953, it received positive reviews so it marks the beginning of a successful career. In fact it is a precursor of the modern graphic novel. R.O. went on to write and/or illustrate several other books for children.

It turns out Blechman is part of a wonderful tradition of intellectual artists, illustrators and cartoonists who at some point in their career fall in love with animation as a fine art. In his case his first staff job was in an animation studio, but not just any studio. It was with John Hubley who had seen *The Juggler of Our Lady*. “He took me to a fancy-shmancy place for lunch and asked me if I’d be willing to join his organization

[Storyboard Studios]. What 22-year-old would say no? For the first year of his New York operation I did storyboards. My stuff was understandably considered un-animatable, because it's damned difficult to animate what is both a broken and a squiggly line... At that time UPA's look was the current style, so all my storyboards were given to other 'designers' as they were then called. That was my first real introduction to animation." ("An interview with R.O. Blechman," 2007, awn.com)

## Blechman on Line

The character and quality of his line is just as important to Blechman as the content of his art. In an interview in *Eye Magazine*, winter 2018, titled "Firm grasp on a shaky line" he describes his early (ca. 1952) drawn lines as "rigid, lifeless, no character to them at all. I tried different things, sometimes drawing with a pencil, liking the graphite quality that gave me, even adopting Ben Shahn's stitched line, a look that was then popular among illustrators. Eventually I settled on my now trademark shaky line, a look partly natural, partly contrived. Then the draft caught up with me, and I traded my pen and pencil for a rifle."

When asked in 2007 (*An interview with R.O. Blechman* published by awn.com) the interviewer asked, "The squiggly broken line is your signature; where did it come from?" he replied, "My very first job, around 1952, was for a short-lived magazine called *Park East*. They gave me a page and told me to go do some drawings. I used a very tight crosshatch line, which was popular at the time. I think Ben Shahn was the innovator of that; Andy Warhol also used a crosshatch line when he was doing illustration. The reason I did it was because I was paid \$100 and I thought they have to get their money's worth. They certainly wouldn't pay me all that money for a nervous broken line, so I took a popular style."

"I suppose I was playing with different styles and I kind of liked one particular look, so I started developing it. It's not as if I was born with it. I can see some similarities to the stuff I did when I was a student at Music and Art High School, but I see more dissimilarities to my present look."

"I think any artist creates his or her own style -- it's natural and unnatural; natural in the sense that it came rather effortlessly, but then you perfect it... It's interesting that when my work is animated it's enhanced by the animators. They give it a fluidity and emotion, and not merely the motion my work doesn't have when it's a still drawing -- when I'm lucky and work with the right people."

In another interview he said, "Animation should be a highly expressive art -- you should feel the artist behind it, which of course was what Hubley exemplified in his work."



## Blechman's 'What Me Worry' for *Huff Post*

Blechman's career would eventually see him using his creative talents for a wide variety of purposes. During the Viet Nam War he created political cartoons for the liberal *Village Voice*. In the late 1950s he spoke out about the need for racial equality in his work. In recent years he has been concerned about intolerance and disenfranchisement of minority groups.

For corporate America he has designed and animated TV commercials that have gone on to win accolades for their originality. He has explored other avenues including illustrations for publications, graphic novels, humorous print campaigns, and animated TV specials for PBS.

To give you a glimpse of his mature work here are a few examples along with notes about how his career grew. When he left Hubley's Storyboard he worked much of the time freelance, giving his storyboards to Elektra Films to animate (mid 1950s to early 1970s). He opened a design studio in 1960 and then The Ink Tank animation studio in 1977. He has said that by overseeing more of the production under one roof he had a better opportunity to ensure the final work met the standards he desired.

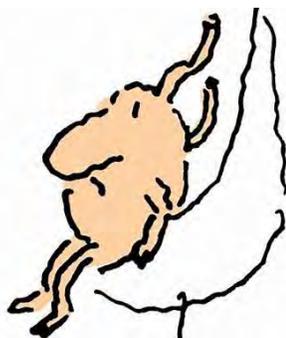
For many years The Ink Tank was a major player in the advertising business. They created hundreds of ads for many of our nation's best-known corporations and institutions. The client list included IBM, General Motors, Burger King, McDonalds, Johnson & Johnson, Hallmark, Sony, Perrier, the Smithsonian, and MTV.

Blechman told awn.com that his decision to close his shop resulted in there being less demand for animation. "All advertising was hit hard after 9/11. In 2002 there wasn't the work and like so many animation studios in the past I had over-expanded. I had two floors, 17 telephone lines and very few of them rang." In 2003 he moved from New York City to Ancram, New York where he continues to stay active as a creative person.

## *The Juggler of Our Lady*, 1958 (film)

One important project in his career happened in 1958. CBS bought Paul Terry's Terrytoons studio and hired new faces to produce contemporary looking cartoons. One of their first decisions was to turn Blechman's *The Juggler of Our Lady* into a nine minute animated short. It was produced by Gene Deitch, Al Kouzel was the director and Boris Karloff was the narrator. Blechman was hired as the creative director. The short from 1958 earned a BAFTA Award nomination for Best Animated Film (a British film award). See it at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL8d20-YxPg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL8d20-YxPg)

I contacted Gene Deitch, whom I've been friends with since the late 1980s that I'm writing about Blechman. He emailed, "There is no question, Karl, about Bob Blechman's genius, and I am proud to have been the first filmmaker to recognize and faithfully produce his work. My production of *The Juggler of Our Lady* as a CinemaScope, 20th Century-Fox, Terrytoon was of course a box office disaster - at least Bill Weiss claimed it was, and it gave him the ammunition to get CBS approval to fire me. Even with its technical limits, and Bob's prolonged worries that I would compromise *The Juggler*, it is one of my proudest achievements. (Although it was a) scary time, I recognized his genius and assigned the super skillful Al Kouzel to strictly follow Bob's instruction, and I got Boris Karloff to demonstrate his true elegance as narrator. My film initiated Bob Blechman's long and powerful filmmaking career. I paid the price, but who in our craft remembers any creative honor in William Weiss? 🐾 Gene"



*Protesting Stomach*, 1967

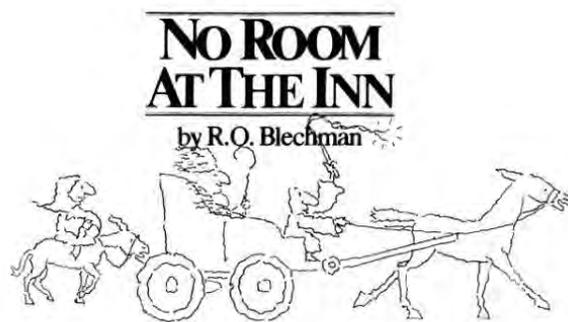
Blechman's most celebrated TV commercial is a man arguing with his stomach who is seated in a chair across from its owner. The 60 second *Protesting Stomach* ad for Alka Seltzer is quite funny (Gene Wilder provided the voice of the stomach). Blechman did the storyboards and Elektra animated it. The ad agency Jack Tinker and Partners came up with the

concept. Animator Jack Dazzo brought the talking stomach to life.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBPPfZCdQYo>

When Blechman was inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame, Steven Heller, Co-chair MFA Design / Designer with the Author & Entrepreneur program at the School of Visual Arts, New York said, "In 1967 a talking stomach was interviewed about its digestion on TV in a commercial spot for Alka-Seltzer, the effervescent cure for indigestion. That a talking organ would change television advertising forever was surprising. Who would have thought such an essentially unattractive muscle could become a TV star, and later an icon of the 'Creative Revolution?' Its creator, R.O. Blechman, knew in his gut that it would. The talking stomach was an instant success and viewers were charmed by its understated hilarity, rendered with R. O. Blechman's famously nervous comic line."

"Understated is the best way to describe Blechman's work. His art foregoes slapstick. His line is genuinely humane. Although many cartoonists have copied the shaky look, no one has ever duplicated the human qualities of his everyman (or every stomach) images. Perhaps the perception of a spiritual humanity has something to do with Blechman's inventive animation work in which he employs voices that transcend the mere line and move from comic to emotionally multifaceted characterizations. (I always associate Blechman's figures with Max von Sydow's dulcet voice. What other cartoonist can trigger such voices in the head?) Blechman's ability to invest emotion onto his scratchy homunculi has to do with his painstaking attention to gestured detail. He is a master of the expressive gesture."



*No Room at the Inn* sequence from *Simple Gifts*, 1978

## *The Ink Tank* (1977-2004)

In 1977 he opened The Ink Tank, a production house with enough space to produce an hour-long Christmas program for PBS called *Simple Gifts*. The show featured six short holiday stories, a forward sequence designed by Maurice Sendak, and actress Colleen Dewhurst

introducing the segments. Blechman produced and directed the show and designed and directed the “No Room at the Inn” segment. It is an animated version of his book *Tutto Esaurito (No Vacancy)* that was published in Italy in 1970. His segment, free of dialog, shows Joseph and Mary trying to find a vacant room on a street where the inns look a bit like overdone Las Vegas motels. It also includes the flight into Egypt. It is a lovely understated sequence. See it at: <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=tsimple+gifts%2c+pbs+special.+blechman&view=detail&mid=12F6469CD139717DE17612F6469CD139717DE176&FORM=VIRE>

The artist/illustrators who worked on the other parts of the hour special are Maurice Sendak, James McMullan, Seymour Chwast, and Charles B. Slackman. Sendak prolog, about a boy who has nothing to give for Christmas, is set in a time of extreme cold in Tudor-esque England. See it at:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbDGIP0Bo9A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbDGIP0Bo9A)

Other segments are a short based on the Toonerville Trolley where a family misplaces their baby in a pile of discarded Christmas wrappings, a bittersweet excerpt from Moss Hart's autobiography *Act One* that is narrated by Jose Ferrer, a reading from the Christmas day entry from the diary of 11 year old Teddy Roosevelt, and a reading of a letter by Captain Edward James Hulse describing the surprising Christmas Truce of 1914 during the first year of WWI.

PBS used to show *Simple Gifts* annually and it was once available on video tape. Now there is a website with letters asking the network to bring the show back as the writers agree that it was a wonderful tradition for families to watch it together. Segments of it can be found on the internet, but not the entire work on one site. It apparently was never released on DVD.



### ***The Soldier's Tale* (1984)**

Directed by R. O. Blechman

One reason I researched and wrote this article is that several years ago I discovered a DVD of *The Soldier's Tale* in Amoeba Records. That was an

exciting find and I was impressed that Blechman had a serious interest in Stravinsky, a composer I grew up enjoying. It turned out that *The Soldier's Tale* was a PBS Great Performance hour special, and along with Igor Stravinsky's music it has Max von Sydow as the voice of devil (he starred in several Ingmar Bergman features). Also, it won an Emmy. The story is a parable about a soldier who trades his fiddle to the devil in return for unlimited economic gain; however, who can beat the devil?

### **Blechman, the Illustrator**

Blechman's work has been seen in print since he was in his teens. His seemingly gentle cartoons often include a subtle meaning including this *New Yorker* cover from the 1970s, drawn during the gasoline crisis (it is not from the current energy crisis). No wonder his work has been included in lots of publications including *Humbug*, *The Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, *Story*, *The Nation*, and *Huffington Post*.



So who is R. O. Blechman? This article barely answers that question as his career has explored the potentials of illustration, design, graphic novels, and filmmaking. He has produced commercials, television specials, broadcast graphics, public service announcements, music videos and lots of other things. He was elected to the Art Directors Hall of Fame in 1999, and the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame in 2013. In 2013 he had an exhibition of his work in the Norman Rockwell Museum. In 2011 the National

Cartoonists Society awarded him a Lifetime Achievement Award. He has created 15 covers for *The New Yorker*, and his animated films were given a retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 2003. At the retrospective *The Soldier's Tale* was accompanied by the Manhattan Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Richard Auldon Clark.

<https://vimeo.com/roblechman>

**I asked several animators if they wanted to contribute to this article.**

**J.J. Sedelmaier**, who worked with R.O. from May 1984 to December 1990, wrote: The Ink Tank was by far, the most unique studio in the U.S. throughout the 70-80s. At a time when animation was dying a slow lingering death, Bob and his crew were producing consistently artful work and stretching animation's potential. The use of designers, cartoonists, illustrators, etc., and translating their style into film gave the spots an unconventional impact at a time when animation was populated more by the "Ducks & Bunnies" school of thought... there was really no place in the States like it. It was Bob and Dick Williams who spearheaded the post-Hubley, Elektra, Tempo, "Artful Animation Movement".

The stellar talents of freelance animators like Tissa David, Tony Eastman and Ed Smith, were essential to the studio's success! Tissa in particular, would only work with Bob and Michael Sporn's projects. (Michael Sporn's films were also a beautiful example of artful work being done in the 80s, but I also think of him as a disciple of Hubley, Bob and Tissa.) Bob also depended strongly on the production talents of people like Sara Calogero. Sara did almost all the watercolor work and was Bob's eyes on endless productions... [Note: RO told Karen Folger Jacobs, "I had the immense privilege of working with one of the great— maybe the greatest— woman animator ever, Tissa David. A filmmaker, although she worked with other people's artwork, but always made the work in so many ways her own.]

Personally, my time at The Ink Tank was essential to my success in this whacky biz. It taught me ALL the options available. At the end of my tenure, I was Executive Producer, Associate Director and the studio's sole Representative - this after starting as an Assistant Animator. It was Bob who pushed me into the "creative management" pool, and made me a producer.

(J.J. is the author of the really informative article, *The Simple but Sublime Line of R.O. Blechman*, posted at <http://artofthespot.com/ro-blechman.html> It includes links to several of R.O.'s works.) We have also shown several of J.J.'s TV commercials and his outrageous shorts he has produced for *Saturday Night Live* (We showed 4 or 5 films by his studio in June.)

**George Griffin** who has been creating exceptional animated shorts since the 1960s, said, *The Soldier's Tale* is Bob's masterpiece...He then proceeded to honor some of the exceptionally talented people who helped Blechman succeed:

Ed Smith, now in his 90s is still Bob's go-to guy. His style and "straight-ahead" work-flow embodies the look and feel.

Tissa David was the essential artist. She is deserving of a book of her own. She took Bob's designs and boards and turned them into an animated narrative, her own film. Her exquisite touch and timing seemed to spring from her pen fully formed, in her layouts, and right there in the PTs.

Many talented animator/artists contributed to *The Soldier's Tale*: Fred Mogubgub, Michael Sporn (early planning stages), Tony Eastman, Janet Perlman, Maciek Albrecht, Fred Burns, Bill Littlejohn, Yvette Kaplan, John Gaug, "to name a few." Also the voice talent Dusan Makavejev, Andre Gregory, et al; and the ink and paint team were just as essential.

**Janet Perlman** wrote me: I have always admired his work, and when I was asked to create a sequence for *The Soldier's Tale*, it was a bit daunting to work with such a great master. Adapting to his style was not easy for me, and in fact I did not fully succeed. For *The Soldier's Tale* sequence, I understand that all my characters needed nose jobs! I also worked on one commercial. I spent little time with him, but I got a precious glimpse of his work process. It is impressive what lies behind those squiggly drawings, which include photographic references, and a full appreciation of human anatomy and architecture. Besides his immense talent, I greatly respect his high standards and tenacity. I loved working with Bob, as I found him to be generous, and he didn't hold back an opinion, good or bad.

**Howard Beckerman**, a veteran of the NY animation industry, author of *Animation, the Whole Story*, highly revered teacher (School for Visual Arts), a charter member of ASIFA-East and a former International ASIFA vice-president, writes us: I first saw Bob's art in the form of greeting cards which he had made on assignment for a friend of mine at UPA, NY. They were funny in a very subtle way. This subtlety was well appreciated at the time, the 1950s when UPA was championing this type of humor, along with others such as George Gobel on TV and Jacques Tati in films.

The more I saw of his work over the years the more I realized his interest in classical themes in art, literature and films. He very much wanted to be involved in turning his ideas into animated movies. In fact, his Christmas cards that had impressed me were very tiny, but had to be unfolded, like a scroll. The gag appeared at the scroll's end, like a torah with a punchline. One dealt with a guy in a 1950s low riding sports car at the

end of a long line of autos held up because, as is revealed at the end of the scroll, there's Santa with sleigh and reindeer holding up traffic. Another showed Santa at one end of a long dining table mumbling something about holiday cheer while hard of hearing Mrs. Santa, seated way over at the other end is saying "What?" In a way these related to animation in that the gag would be introduced on a long "pan." I still have these cards somewhere among my souvenirs.

I always enjoyed Bob's cartoons and his take on the human condition when they appeared in print. There was a lot of pleasure just following the line of thought on the page. It didn't need animation. You could look at the drawings over and over and admire their subtleties. That can't be done with animation. What was important about his animated films, aside from the character attitudes, was the music which enhanced Bob's view of ancient conditions as seen through contemporary notions, as in the scenes of the holy family looking for lodging. The print versions of his work lack music, which in animation could be more important than the sequential drawings.

My observation of R.O.'s work is that it closely reflects his nature. He doesn't reflect somebody else's idea of a comical or human situation, it's totally how his ink drawings reveal his views. Even his handwriting resembles the thin, disconnected lines of his drawing style. Try depositing a check written by Bob and you might experience a queasiness about whether or not the teller will accept it as legitimate. Before banks were diminished to storefronts with pushbutton digital stuff, there was always a guard with a pistol on his hip who might be asked to check you out. Howard Beckerman 2019

Several people reviewed this article and added information to it while it was being written. Special thanks to Howard Beckerman, J.J. Sedelmaier, George Griffin, Gene Deitch, John Canemaker, Janet Perlman and R.O. Blechman.

**SEE HOLEY TOLEDO!, ANIMATION MADE WITH MOLTEN GLASS** Animator Gary Schwartz, who lives in Detroit and teaches in Ann Arbor, sent us a stop-motion film he made when he conducted a week long intensive hands-on animation workshop at the Toledo Museum of Art. He was a guest artist at a GAS Conference (Glass Art Society). The subject was 1600 degree molten glass and it was made in the museum's "hot shop" of the Glass museum.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoeasILvT38&feature=youtu.be>



Manet VR project *Un Bar Aux Folies Bergeres*.

## ANIMA BRUSSELS

March 1-10, 2019 by Nancy Denney-Phelps

With a festival that runs for 10 days you hope to see a wealth of good films, and Anima Brussels offers that and so much more. For the first time, there was a Virtual Reality competition. The 8 VR projects ranged in length from two to twenty minutes. One took the viewer from the middle of the ocean into the world of a half-human. Another was the European premier of *Gloomy Eyes*, a French/Argentine co production by Fernando Maldonado and Jorge Tereso. It introduced us to the world of a half-zombie child.

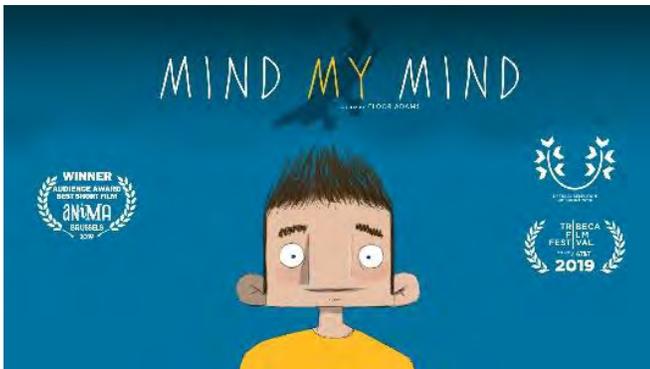
The experience that I enjoyed most was Gabrielle Lissot's six minute *Un Bar Aux Folies Bergeres*. Based on the painting by Edouard Manet of the same name. The 4 act scenario took me inside the minds of the artist; his model Suzon, a barmaid at the Folies Bergeres; a bar patron who is watching Suzon; and finally into the Courtauld Gallery in London where *Un Bar Aux Folies Bergeres* is on exhibit. I am very familiar with the painting, but even if the viewer isn't everyone will enjoy this journey into the exuberant world of the Folies Bergeres at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Set in 1900, *Age of Sail* by Oscar-winning director John Kahrs (Disney's *Paper Man*) is about a curmudgeonly old sailor who has set himself adrift in the Atlantic Ocean with no food or water on his last voyage "home". When he rescues a young woman who has fallen overboard from a passing ocean liner, he discovers that there is more to life than despair. The story was alright, although a happy ending for all was very predictable. I found the VR a bit choppy and the character design looked a bit simplistic compared to other VR projects that I have seen. The creative team also made a flat 2D version film for Oscar competition. That version has been in several festival competitions and I did not find it particularly impressive. The movement of the characters did not flow properly and the film looked flat and one dimensional.

This year there are an exceptionally large number of good short animations in festival competitions. I had been looking forward to the last part

of Marta Pajek's trilogy *Impossible Figures and Other Stories III*. I was not disappointed. The Polish animator once again uses black and white drawings with the merest hint of red for this portrait of a woman in an exhausting relationship which allures and repulses at the same time. The couple begins a dangerous dance around each other that becomes more and more ferocious. The 12-minute film drew me further and further into the dark space that the characters occupy.

A new film by the Dutch trio Job, Joris, & Marieke is always a treat and *A Double Life* is no exception. The 2 ½ minute film is about a couple who put themselves in their partner's shoes for a change by swapping gender roles. It all begins as a harmless gender-bender prank, but when the wife discovers how much more interesting life is as a man, a marital tragedy is in the making. What starts as a humorous film turns into a serious commentary about gender inequality. The Oscar-nominated trio (*A Single Life*, 2015) is known for quirky, funny stop motion films that always have a dark underbelly.



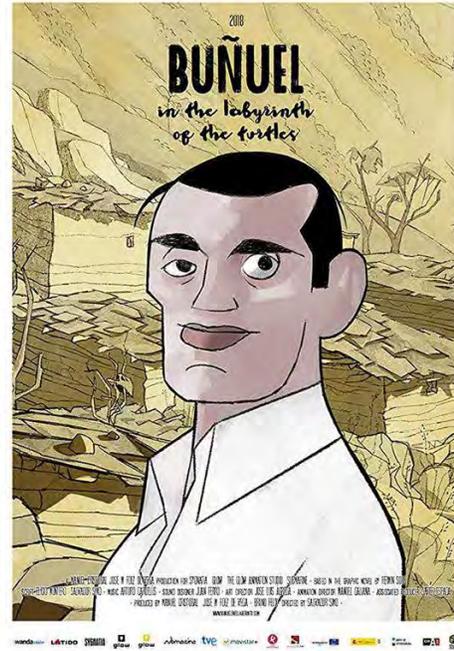
*Mind My Mind* was the most pleasant surprise for me at the festival. When I see that there is a 29-minute film in a program I think “Oh no!”, but Dutch animator Floor Adams has created a film about Asperger's that is so entertaining and clever that it seems like it is only a few minutes long.

Floor's main character, Chris, who has Asperger's, is so interesting that I became completely absorbed in his world. He camouflages his obsession for building miniature dive bombers and stumbles through life thanks to Hans, an alter ego avatar living in his head. It is quite an obsession because planes hang from every inch of the ceiling of his model building room. Hans prepares Chris' “social scripts” for his life outside of his apartment.

When Chris meets zoologist Gwen, sparks begin to fly, but he doesn't know how to deal with the situation. After several ups and downs in the relationship, love wins out proving that there really is someone for everyone.

The hand-drawn film tackles the difficult subject of Asperger's with sensitivity, humor, and deep

understanding. In a conversation with Floor, she told me that she studied Art Therapy and has worked with people with Asperger's. Several of her therapy students also worked on her film. The real proof that viewers were truly touched by *Mind My Mind* is that the film received the Audience Award at Anima Brussels. This does not seem to be a film that juries appreciate but audiences certainly connect with it. It has now won 2 additional audience awards at other festivals.



People are finally beginning to realize that feature-length animation is not just for children. 2019 is a strong year for adult feature films. The 75 minute *Bunuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles*, directed by Salvador Simo, is a fascinating, yet disturbing film. It explores the trials and tribulations Spanish filmmaker Luis Bunuel encountered in shooting his 27-minute documentary *Las Hurdes*. The film also examines in animation and archival footage how Bunuel bent reality to his own ends in the making of the 1933 documentary.

Finding it difficult to raise money for a third film following his 2 Surrealist films, *Un Chien Andalou (An Andalusian Dog)* and *L'Age d'Or (Golden Age)*, which people found shocking, Bunuel decided to make a documentary about a poor isolated Spanish village, Las Hurdes. Bunuel is offered financing by his Anarchist artist friend Ramon Acin using the winnings from a lottery ticket. Inspired by Mauricio Legendre's book of *Human Geography* which was given to Bunuel by French photographer Eli Lotar, they set off for Spain with a cameraman. Director Simo was given access to Bunuel's copy of *Human Geography* by Bunuel's son which contained the filmmaker's original notes.

Bunuel and Acin found the harshness and misery of the countryside disturbing. No sooner did they arrive in

the first village than they witnessed the ritual in which women about to be married were practicing the ancient ritual of riding down the main street on horses, tearing the heads off chickens hanging by their feet from a rope. This scene is part of the live action footage in *Bunuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles*.

I found the 1933 archival footage fascinating. In one segment we are shown how Bunuel manipulated the film to fit his ends. There is a scene where a goat appears to tumble to its death down a cliff after accidentally losing its footing. In reality, the goat fell because Bunuel shot it. The rough style and muted colors of the animation fit perfectly with the archival footage. Although the film can be brutal at times, it gives us a realistic look at the poverty and depravation in 1930's Spain. Anyone familiar with the conditions that led up to the Spanish Civil War will find this a fascinating film. If you are a devotee of Bunuel's Surrealist films, *Bunuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles* will give you a bit of an insight into the mind of this creative genius.

We don't get to see enough feature-length animation from Latin and South America so *Virus Tropical* from Colombian director Santiago Caicedo was interesting to me. This coming of age story was adapted from the graphic novel by Colombian/Ecuadorian cartoonist Powerpaola.



Beginning with the night Paola was conceived by a father who is a pastor and a mother who is not supposed to be able to have any more children, we follow Paolo as she grows up living between Ecuador and Colombia. Over the years Paolo, the youngest of three daughters raised mostly by a single mom, gropes and fumbles her way through friendships, new schools, clunky romances, and various family dramas until she finally finds her place in the universe.

Animated in a black and white graphic style, the very lo-fi Latin indie music adds charm to a story told from a young lady's point of view. A couple of people told me that they thought that this was a "chick film" but I don't think it matters whether it is about a girl or a guy. Anyone interested in life in South America, who likes good indie films with Latin music and an entertaining story will enjoy *Virus Tropical*.

The three Belgium competition programs showcased the best of the country's Flemish and Walloon animators. The first 2 programs were devoted to professional films. The 3<sup>rd</sup> screening gave us a chance to see what the new crop of Belgian talent looks like in the Student program.

I was enchanted with *Nuit Cherie (Sweet Night)*, a 13-minute film by Thierry Zamparutti. It is a tale about a bear who lives in the Himalayas. He should be hibernating but he can't get to sleep and he feels miserable. To take his mind off of his insomnia his friend, the White Monkey, tells the bear that they should go to his Aunt's house to eat some honey. Along the way, the pair discover the giant footprints made by Yeti in the snow and on that *Nuit Cherie*, they discover the secret of who the Yeti really is. The story is delightfully original, the character designs charming, and most of all the film's backgrounds are stunning. *Nuit Cherie* was given the Best Belgian Short Film Award.



Each year the 5-day *Futuranima* is held during Anima Brussels. It is an opportunity for professional animators to exchange ideas on panel discussions, to network, and present Master Classes. I was very curious to learn about Jeremy Clapin's 1<sup>st</sup> feature-length film, *I Lost My Body* at his Work in Progress Master Class. Jeremy's short films *Une Histoire Vertebrale* (2006) and *Skhizein* (2008) were quirky hand-drawn films so I was looking forward to seeing his latest film, a loose adaptation of Guillaume Laurant's book *Happy Hand*.

This very adult film has an interesting narrative structure. One strand of the story follows Naoufel, a young man who moves to Paris in search of a new life. The other takes us along on the journey of Naoufel's severed hand which escapes from a refrigerator in a dissection laboratory and wants to be reunited with its body. Throughout the film, the hand reminisces about when he was still attached to his body. In his search, the hand is involved in chase and action scenes in the grittier parts of Paris.

Jeremy showed the basic storyboard and animatic as well as a clip from the film. As of this writing, the film took top honors at Cannes Critic's Week and will be screened at Annecy this year.

Stop Motion With Kim Kukeleire and Emma DeSwaef was as much fun as it was instructive. Kim was head animator on Wes Anderson's *Isle of Dogs* and Emma is half of the team of Emma DeSwaef and Marc James Roels who have created such amazing stop motion films as *Oh Willy* and *This Magnificent Cake*. To begin the dialogue the ladies said that they love each other's films. The conversation between these two stop motion specialists pointed out two very different approaches to creating great stop motion films. Kim said that Wes was never actually on any of the multiple sets of *Isle of Dogs* during the shooting, but was in constant contact with the crews through the use of a two-way exchange of video clips. Nothing in the film was improvised and Wes was very definite about exactly what he wanted. She showed a very humorous video that he had sent demonstrating exactly how he wanted a character to move.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Emma talked about creating films on a low budget, which necessitated a great deal of improvisation. Emma and Marc also utilized as many interns as possible. She showed an extremely funny video of Marc demonstrating character movements with a plastic water bottle as a prop. Since they did not have room to keep most of the sets and props from *This Magnificent Cake* most of them went into the garbage bin, but they did save some of the choicest ones which Anima Brussels had on display in an exhibition hall.

The exhibition was beautifully staged and it was delightful to see the carefully detailed precision that Emma and Marc put into making the sets, characters, and miniature objects from the film. The centerpiece of the exhibition was the beautiful to-scale replica of the royal greenhouse that Leopold II built. It looked beautiful in the film and when I had the chance to see it in person I realized how perfect every detail was on it and what time-consuming craftsmanship went into building it.

In the other Flagey exhibition hall, there was a tribute to *Les Shadoks*. This animated television series which ran from 1968 to 1974 caused a sensation when it was first broadcast. The Shadoks were bird-like in appearance and were characterized by ruthlessness and stupidity, inhabiting a 2-dimensional world. Created by Jacques Rouxel, *The Shadoks* quickly repelled some French citizens who thought that their behavior and attitudes were disgraceful while others thought of the shows as a wacko piece of "philosophical waffle". The series added a touch of the avant-garde to the otherwise bland French TV of the times. The exhibition featured original cels and storyboards as well as figurines from the show, memorabilia, and photos of the creators at work.



Nancy and Paul Bush

Another special event was a retrospective screening of Paul Bush's films. Paul titled his program My Beautiful, Stupid Tealeaf Films. He introduced a program of what he considers his 8 most important films with "Beauty may be superficial but it can be found in a tea leaf as much as among tulips". He began with his 8-minute film *His Comedy* made in 1998 which he said was inspired by Gustav Dore engravings.

*Furniture Poetry* (1999) was the film that first introduced me to Paul's work. He said that it was his first funny film. It is indeed humorous to see apples, plates, tables, and chairs put through rigorous balletic paces. The film stands the test of time and is as enjoyable to watch now as when I first saw it. *Lay Bare* (2012) is a composite portrait of the human body that is erotic and comic at the same time. <https://vimeo.com/user5238437>

The program ended with the making of *Ride*. The 2018 film is an homage to motorbikes. Paul discovered a man living in Northern Portugal who has an extremely large collection of Portuguese motorbikes that he has restored. It is not a museum, just a personal passion. In *Ride*, hundreds of motorbikes are animated frame by frame in an homage to the iconic motorbike design and culture of the 1950s and 1960s. We watch as a rider prepares his bike and takes off on an idealized journey into the countryside. For anyone who loves Paul's work and motorbikes as much as I do the making of is as entertaining as the film itself.

Running in conjunction with the festival at Cinema Gallery was an exhibition of Paul's work and the premiere of his first feature film *Babeldom*. The film is set in a city so massive and growing at such a speed that soon, it is said, light itself will not escape its gravitational pull. How can 2 lovers communicate when one is inside the city and the other one outside? Paul calls the film "an elegy to urban life, set against the backdrop of a city of the future". The background was assembled from film footage shot in modern cities around the world.

The first week of Anima Brussels takes place during the annual Carnival Week, a school holiday, so there are lots of screenings for young filmgoers of all ages. For the very youngest preschoolers, *Rita and Krokodil* has short, no dialogue episodes that are long on laughs. Danish animator Siri Melchior has created a charming series of films about Rita, a very determined little 4-year-old girl who likes to explore the world with her best friend the Crocodile who she persuades to get into all kinds of mischief with her.

For older children, there were such perennial favorites as *Ernest and Celestine* and *My Life as a Courgette* which were part of this year's Focus on France.

Young people from 6 to 12 years old could attend daily workshops organized by the Brussels studio Zorobabel. At the workshops, they could try their hand at stop motion, sand and experimental animation to name just a few of the techniques available to explore.

Before the awards were handed out at the closing night ceremony, the audience was treated to a new adventure of Vincent Patar and Stephane Aubier's delight *Cowboy, Indian, and Horse* series. This time Cowboy and Indian want to go to the agricultural fair. After a skateboard accident leaves Horse with amnesia, he can't remember where he put the crucially needed entrance tickets. Cowboy and Indian decide to build a time machine to help Horse find them. That is where all of the mayhem and fun starts.

Patar and Aubier are absurdist in the best sense of the word, once again pushing their toy plastic figures to the limits in their latest adventure. They provide the audience with 26 minutes of wacky, fun-filled silliness where all's well that ends well. It is another hilarious romp with Cowboy, Indian, and Horse.

Festival Coordinator Doris Cleven and her staff do an excellent job of putting together a 10-day festival that is full of variety while retaining high quality. A special thank you goes to Karin Vandenrydt who always finds time to answer my questions and helps me out even when she is busy taking care of the juries. I am already looking forward to the 2020 edition which will be held from 21 February to 1 March. This is a festival that I can highly recommend. Everyone will find a lot of interesting things to see and do. You can learn more about the festival at: [www.animafestival.be](http://www.animafestival.be)

**MICHAEL JANTZ'S NEXT BOOK STARRING THE NORM IS AT THE PRINTERS** He is delighted that he has finally approved of the proof for the new *THE NORM 4.0* collection. Details at <http://jantze.com> He also invites you to hang out at his studio on his Patreon page at: <http://patreon.com/jantze>

**ART BY 5 KOREAN-AMERICAN ARTISTS FROM PIXAR** Exhibit is at the S. Korean Consulate, 3500 Clay, SF, free, 9-5 pm, Mon. – Fri., through Sept. 20.



O D D  
D O G

**WANT TO BE INVITED TO THE PREMIERE OF 'ODD DOG'?** Keika Lee, an independent animator, is premiering her short *Odd Dog* September 8. She financed the project with a successful Kickstarter campaign. "The film stars a cat who thinks he's a dog. He tries to find a friend only to be turned away. Then one day he meets a boy who accepts him for who he is."

<http://odddogfilm.eventbrite.com> for details and free tickets. There will be a panel presentation with some of the production crew. Keika says, "My crew consisted of mostly women and Asian Americans which I am super proud of. I want to encourage more diversity in the industry." For details about attending:

[keika@greyscaleanimation.com](mailto:keika@greyscaleanimation.com)

Information <http://www.linkedin.com/in/cupkeika> and <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1626068999/odd-dog-a-short-animated-film/>



**'TOY STORY 4' - BELIEVE IT OR NOT ITS OPENING WAS SEEN AS A SLIGHT DISAPPOINTMENT TO SOME** "Was *Toy Story 4* a victim of franchise fatigue? Pamela McClintock claims some sequels and spinoffs are struggling at the box office, and that the fourth installment in the franchise did not meet tracking forecasts; however, the film nonetheless far outperformed other sequels that were released this year. "The expectations were overblown," says box office analyst Paul Dergarabedian

of Comscore. "In a vacuum, *Toy Story 4* had a spectacular weekend."

While it was expecting to gross between \$140 to \$165 million, it only took in about \$118 million in the U.S. Don't cry, it did make \$238 million globally and that was "a record for the genre" according to the *Hollywood Reporter*. The paper said it did huge business in Latin America and Europe, but oh no, it struggled in China where it only took in \$13.4 million. Two days after the numbers were in, the trades publications were asking if the film had franchise fatigue.

In terms of past successful animated feature opening weekends *Incredibles 2* grossed \$183 million and *Finding Dory* took in \$135 million. Third on the list of the biggest animated openings is DreamWork Animation's *Shrek the Third* with a gross of \$125 million.

### ARE ANIMATED FEATURES STILL SOLID MONEY MAKERS?

The big concern for the industry is that so far this year business has been lackluster. Where are the mega-hits? *Toy Story 4* is only the third release of 2019 to cross \$100 million so far in its opening week. Disney isn't too concerned as the four best openings of the year have been Disney products and the first three are now the top box office champs of 2019. *Avengers: Endgame* has grossed \$835 million in the U.S.A. and almost \$2.75 billion worldwide. *Captain Marvel* has grossed \$426.7 million in the U.S. and \$1,128 billion worldwide. *Aladdin* (2019 version) has grossed \$287.5 million in the U.S. and \$810 million worldwide.

Non-Disney/Pixar films have not fared that well with the exception of *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*. It had a \$129 million budget and it has grossed \$519,586,035 so far. *Lego Movie 2* has grossed \$192 million worldwide. (The first one took in \$469 million and it had a \$60 million budget.) *Secret Life of Pets 2* has grossed only \$195 million worldwide so far. (The first one took in \$875 million and it was made on a \$75 million budget.) *Missing Link* took in only \$166 million. Also the annual program of *Oscar Nominated Shorts* has a low overhead so it made some money on a gross of \$3.5 million.

**LAST MINUTE SAD NEWS – KAJ PINDAL, ONE OF THE NFB OF CANADA'S STALWARTS HAS DIED** He made thousands of us smile and laugh. The awn.com obit has 5 links to his films.

<https://www.animationmagazine.net/people/peep-and-the-big-wide-world-creator-kaj-pindal-dies-at-91/>

## ASIFA-SF NEEDS YOUR HELP!!!

### VOLUNTEERS WANTED AS THE ASIFA-SF NEWSLETTER KEEPS GROWING IN SIZE

Pete Davis, who has been proofreading our issues for decades (and does a good job of catching my typos), would like some help. He says, "Well, I hate to admit that I could use help, but then I've been rushing the proofreading at the last minute more than I like lately." Can someone please volunteer to help? We can either give you parts of the next issue to proof or he could proof every other month like he used to do and give you the next issue. Either arrangement would work.

### WRITERS ARE ALSO NEEDED

Make the local animation world more interesting. Contribute local, national and/or international news. Send tips, articles, self-promotions, and other items to us. Toot your horn! If you are working on a personal or professional project, tell our readers about it. We need more news about local companies as well, so correct that. Is an interesting animation event about to happen that we may not know about? Are you excited about new software or a new short on the internet? Etc.

Contact [karlcohen@earthlink.net](mailto:karlcohen@earthlink.net).

### ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION

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*ASIFA-SF is a chapter of:* Association Internationale du Film d'Animation with almost 40 chapters around the world. Membership is \$26 a year with printed newsletter mailed to you or \$21 a year if you want the e-mailed version.

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