

ASIFA
THE INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION ASSOCIATION
Feb 2019



ASIFA
THE INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 225263
SF, CA 94122

SF STATE'S ANIMATION SOCIETY AND ASIFA-SF ARE PROUD TO PRESENT

THE OSCAR SHOWCASE TOUR

SEE THE FIVE NOMINATED ANIMATED SHORTS
WITH SOME OF THE NOMINATED ANIMATORS PRESENT



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 7:30PM

San Francisco State University, Coppola Theatre

In the Fine Arts Building, room 101, free, public invited

Campus map at www.sfsu.edu/~sfsu/sumap

Meet several of the Academy Award nominees and their fellow directors as we celebrate their achievements and welcome them as our guests in San Francisco on the first of a nine day tour to meet the west coast animation community. The program runs 56 minutes plus questions and answers.



Animal Behaviour,

Alison Snowden and David Fine



One Small Step

Andrew Chesworth and Bobby Pontillas



Late Afternoon

Louise Bagnall, Nuria González, Blanco



Bao, Domee Shi and Becky Neiman-Cobb



Weekends, Trevor Jimenez

DISCOVER WORLD CLASS ANIMATION
SEE HIGHLIGHTS FROM EUROPE'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS ANIMATION CELEBRATION
ENJOY EIGHT OF THE BEST FILMS THAT WERE IN THE COMPETITION

25TH ANNUAL STUTTGART INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ANIMATION



Program

CAT DAYS directed by Jon Frickey, produced by Jon Frickey from Germany and Takashi Horiguchi from Japan, 2017, 11:09 min. Winner of the festival's Grand Prix (15,000 euros). The jury's statement was "The five of us agreed fairly quickly on this year's winner. The film has it all: It offers many levels of interpretation, it transcends age, has smart humor, it offers an honest and sometimes funny child's perspective on life...and it has cats! We all felt that it's hard to make something this level of complexity feel that effortless."

ENOUGH directed by Anna Mantzaris from the Royal College of Art, Great Britain 2017, 2:19 min., winner of the Lotte Reiniger Award (10,000 euros). The jury's statement was: "A blunt, hilarious, short... what we all sometimes feel we want to do."

NEGATIVE SPACE by directors Ru Kuwahata and Max Porter, France 2017, 5:30 min., winner of the audience award (6,000 euros). It also received an Oscar nomination in 2018.

OBON directed by Anna Samo and Andre Hormann, Germany, 15 min. In Obon a Hiroshima survivor reflects back on her life story. Obon is a day to honor the spirits of your ancestors. It is a visually stunning work of art.

LATE AFTERNOON by Louise Bagnell, Ireland, 2017, 9:29 min., nominated for the Academy Award's Best Animated Short, 2019. Emily, disconnected from the world around her, dives into her memories.

POLIANGULAR by Alexandra Castellanros Solis, Mexico, 2017, 5:30 min. Searchers pursue mysterious, seemingly unattainable objects. They want to find out what they are and what will happen if they catch one.

UGLY by Nikita Diakur, Germany, 11:54 min., 2017. An ugly cat struggles to coexist in a fragmented and broken world, eventually finding a soulmate in a mystical chief.

VOYAGERS by Gauthiers Ammeux, Valentine Baillon and friends, Ecole Mol's, France, 2017, 7:33 min. An outrageous encounter in space between an astronaut, a tiger, a hunter and a goldfish.

Founded in 1982, the festival is now one of the world's leading events for animation. The six day event had 95,000 attendees in 2018 who came to see the most creative works in this exciting medium.

Tuesday, February 19, CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO, 5:10 pm
Rosenberg Library, A/V Room 305. 50 Frida Kahlo Way (formerly Phelan Avenue)
There may be a March screening at CCSF at a better time for people that work.

Friday, February 22, BERKELEY CITY COLLEGE (International Cat Day), 7 pm
In the school's large auditorium, 2050 Center Street, Berkeley

Monday, Feb, 25, at DE ANZA, Advanced Technology Center theatre (Room 120) 7 PM



JOHN LASSETER IS NOW HEAD OF SKYDANCE MEDIA IN LA – AND IS THE SUBJECT OF A MAJOR CONTROVERSY

He has been hired by Skydance Media run by David Ellison (CEO). He wants to give him a second chance; however, women are speaking out saying this is the wrong message to give women. Some say they were shocked by the news while others say Lasseter isn't "a Harvey Weinstein," so his behavior is an acceptable business risk. In other words if his "missteps" don't include sexual assault, violence, coerced rape, or actively ending someone's career, they don't warrant his being banned for life from the industry.

David Ellison told *Variety*, "Lasseter has been forthright in taking ownership of his behavior, apologized for his actions and has spent the past year on sabbatical analyzing and improving his workplace behavior... We did not enter into this decision lightly. John has acknowledged and apologized for his mistakes and, during the past year away from the workplace, has endeavored to address and reform them." Mr. Ellison did not specify how he has improved, nor did he explain what "employed outside counsel to investigate the allegations" means.

Somebody from Women in Film told the press that hiring him, "Endorses and perpetuates a broken system." Nancy Phelps says, "I find this thoroughly disgusting and a slap in the face to the women that had the courage to speak out about his behavior." She has described some of her own past work experiences as "not pleasant for women in the work place. Unless we fight to change things they will never get better and letting people like Lasseter get away with a slap on the hand because he is 'so valuable' is not right. Just because I had to go through shit doesn't mean that I want young women today to have to do it."

A retired Navy officer has a more tolerant point of view. She says she believes "some folks do deserve a second chance. I've worked for and with many men in private and military organizations. If we removed all the men who never learned to control their hormones, how many men would honestly have jobs? Yes, I could have

said 'me too,' but I moved on several times over the past decades."

The negative reaction to Lasseter's being hired caught executives at Skydance off guard so they doubled down by sending out more positive comments about his offences are minor compared some of the men in the news in 2018. Skydance and Paramount want to make it perfectly clear **LASSETER IS NOT A HARVEY WEINSTEIN!** They consider his coming on board an acceptable business risk and that while his "missteps" have never been well defined, they suggest he is not guilty of the grossest forms of behavior.

An opinion piece in the *NY Times* said the complaints made by Pixar and Disney employees seem no worse than the crap Trump is guilty of (and he still has his job). Lasseter lost his job so there may be more serious reasons as to why Disney "retired" him than what has been reported in the press. He has been reported to have touched, grabbed, felt, and kissed women without their permission. He has made comments about physical attributes and has gotten rowdy when drinking. (Trump doesn't drink.) John is also said to have "become increasingly domineering over the years."

Women opposing his being hired should note David's father is Larry Ellison, one of the nation's richest billionaires (Oracle computers). I suspect that no matter how loud their protest becomes, if Lasseter produces profitable films and he stays out of trouble he will keep his job.

The *Hollywood Reporter* says, "Skydance Animation is a small, untested player. It relies on a partnership with Madrid-based Ilion Animation Studios, a Los Angeles-based staff of 65 people and a distribution deal with Paramount Pictures. One of the projects in Skydance's pipeline, set up under the company's previous chief, Bill Damaschke, is a fantasy with a female protagonist, led by two of the most important female creative figures in feature animation, *Shrek* director Vicky Jenson and *Beauty and the Beast* and *Lion King* screenwriter Linda Woolverton."

Skydance held town hall meetings with their staff, giving them the chance to ask Ellison and Lasseter pointed questions. Ellison said senior female members of his team had signed off on the decision. Animators were told Lasseter's contract clearly states that he will be fired if he engages in future inappropriate conduct or if past misdeeds that he has not shared come to light.

Reports say Lasseter answered blunt questions from young female staff members. He admitted to wrongdoing and said he is committed to proving he has reformed.

At Paramount not everybody is happy with John being hired by Skydance. Mirielle Soria who heads their

animation unit gave suggestions to Skydance in the past, but now she has said her creative notes have come to an end and her staff will not be working with Skydance. She told the press those were her feelings, not those of Paramount's front office.

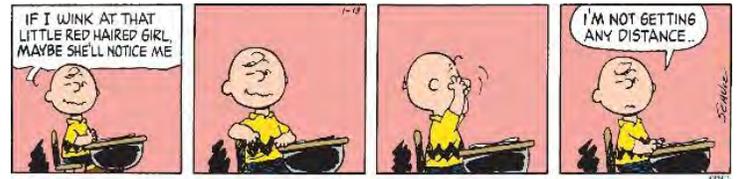


FRI. FEB 8, 7:15 PM, SF INDIE FEST PRESENTS 'LA CASA LOBO' ('THE WOLF HOUSE'), a feature from Chile, by Cristobal Leon and Joaquin Cocna, 75 min. In *La Casa Lobo* a young woman emerges from the walls and melts into the floor, paintings cry, a tree grows in a living room and pigs are transformed into children. Drawing on both fairy tale and surrealistic elements, this stop-motion puppet film is both visually and emotionally stunning. Check their schedule for theatre (could be at the Roxie or Victoria.) Trailer at: <https://vimeo.com/270765808> password is diluvioprivate

SUN. FEB. 9, 12:30 PM, MON. FEB. 11, 7:15 PM, SF INDIE FEST, Drawn, Painted, and Pixelated, 93 min. This program features new animation from around the world, with a wide range of styles and content. Titles are *Trump Bites*, *I Beehive Street*, *Gissando*, *Dahlia*, *God I Need A Girlfriend*, *Kevin Kline Live #3*, *I Can't Bring You Away*, *Fly Trap*, *Music & Clowns*, *The Elephant Song*, *Subway Commute*, *I Had Too Much To Think Last Night*, *The Christmas Rabbit*. I've seen several, but not all of the shorts. My favorites were *Gissando* by a USC student that is an impressive stop-motion or slow-motion study using real materials/objects. *Trump Bites* by Bill Plympton includes his "shocking" *Trump and Putin: a Love...* (you will be surprised). *I Had Too Much To Think Last Night* is a 1 minute crazy journey into the artist's mind (too much LSD?) *I Beehive Street* is full of amusing and unusual activities in an apartment complex. It seems like it is a prize winner from Eastern Europe and I was delighted by all of its surprises. Some of the other films in the program were probably included for the appeal of their artwork (including *Dahlia* and *Subway Commute*). As for *God I Need A Girlfriend*, it shows animation can also be an unsettling experience.

VINCE COLLINS PRESENTS HIS ANIMATED PSYCHEDELIC 'LAST MAGIC SHOW' Live action films of magic shows never look great as you know they can be faked. Vince's show is so unreal that you know he is going to show you something bizarre and he does. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0zQKZX5vZ4>

GKIDS TO DISTRIBUTE 'THIS MAGNIFICENT CAKE!' Trailer - <https://www.awn.com/news/trailer-gkids-acquires-noram-rights-magnificent-cake>



THE MYSTERY OF THE GIRL WITH THE RED HAIR IS REVEALED A new exhibit at the Charles M. Schulz Museum explores the real-life story behind Charlie Brown's unrequited love. The exhibit *Behind Peanuts: The Little Red-Haired Girl* which runs from January 31–August 4, 2019, is about Schulz's unrequited romance that lasted 6 months in 1959-'60. It ended when Carol Johnston Wood rejected his marriage proposal. She was mentioned many times in the strip, but only appeared once and it was simply a silhouette of her. The museum is in Santa Rosa. On Feb. 14 admission to the museum is free for people with red hair.



CRUSADER RABBIT WITH HIS FRIEND RAGS THE TIGER WAS MADE IN BERKELEY BY J. WARD AND ALEX ANDERSON. IT WAS THE FIRST LIMITED ANIMATED SERIES SCREENED ON TV, 1950

THE CARTOON ART MUSEUM IS SHOWING RARE ANIMATION ART From the earliest hand-drawn cartoons to today's blockbuster CGI films, all animation begins with an artist and an idea, *A Treasury of Animation* showcases original production art following the evolution of animation from the 1920s onward. The works are from the Cartoon Art Museum's permanent collection.

ASIFA-HOLLYWOOD AND UCLA ARE PRESENTING A 3 DAY MARATHON OF FILMS THAT THEY HAVE RECENTLY RESTORED February 15-17, the archive will present – from 9am to midnight each day – a large selection of newly preserved (most presented in 35mm). The animation includes Betty Boop’s *Old Man in the Mountain*, two George Pal Puppets from 1944, a psychedelic Paul Terry short *Pink Elephants*, 1937, a student film by Robert Able and other rare works.

<http://www.animationscoop.com/restored-classic-animation-highlights-2019-ucla-festival-of-preservation/>



GLAS IS BRINGING AN IMPRESSIVE GROUP OF ANIMATION MASTERS TO BERKELEY, MARCH 21 - 24

The guests of honor include several of animation’s finest independent artists plus several up and coming talents. Details www.glasanimation.com



“RUBEN BRANDT, COLLECTOR” WAS A LONG SHOT IN THE ANNIE AND OSCAR COMPETITIONS It was directed by Milorad Krstic from Hungary. He says, “I came up with the (art) heist premise about a psychotherapist who is forced by his nightmares to rob famous museums to get the paintings

he wants.” There are hundreds of characters (rigged and cutouts) with peculiar shapes and proportions in keeping with the mostly surreal style of the paintings. The plot involves several famous paintings including Frédéric Bazille’s *Portrait of Renoir*, Vincent van Gogh’s *Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin*, and Andy Warhol’s *Elvis*.

BILL PLYMPTON’S BRIEF VISIT TO SF I spent a wonderful day with Bill and over dinner he said *Ruben Brant* was the best animated feature he has seen in recent months. At his Sketchfest his presentation included two new *Trump Bits* (another is almost done) and a new commissioned anti-Trump music video that was impressive. The latter is for a DVD that will be out later this year.

ASIFA-HOLLYWOOD’S ANNIE AWARDS HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR NOMINATIONS This year’s Best Animated Feature nominations are: *Early Man* (Aardman Animations), *Incredibles 2* (Pixar Animation Studios), *Isle of Dogs* (Fox Searchlight Pictures/Indian Paintbrush/American Empirical Pictures), *Ralph Breaks The Internet* (Walt Disney Animation Studios) and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (Sony Pictures Animation).

The Best Animated Feature-Independent nominations are: *Ce Magnifique Gâteau! (This Magnificent Cake!)* (Beast Animation, Vivement Lundi!), *Pedri Animation*, *MFKZ* (Ankama/Studio 4°C), *Mirai* (Studio Chizu), *Ruben Brandt, Collector* (Hungarian National Film Fund) and *Tito and the Birds* (Bits Productions, Split Studio).

The Annie Award nominations for Best Animated Short Subject went to *Grandpa Walrus* from Caïmans Productions, *Lost & Found* from Wabi Sabi Studios, *Solar Walk* by Nørlum, *Untravel* from Film House Baš Čelik, Serbia Co-production: BFilm, Bratislava & Your Dreams Factory, Bratislava, and *Weekends* by Past Lives Productions.

The Annie Awards cover 36 categories and include Best Animated Feature, Best Animated Feature-Independent, Special Productions, Commercials, Short Subjects, Student Films and Outstanding Individual Achievements, as well as the honorary Juried Awards. The winners will be announced at a black tie ceremony on Saturday, February 2, 2019 at UCLA’s Royce Hall.

Juried Awards will also be presented that honor unparalleled achievements and exceptional contributions to animation. Three Winsor McCay Award recipients have been selected by the ASIFA-Hollywood Board of Directors for their exemplary industry careers -- Academy Award-winning director, animator and art director, Ralph Eggleston; Frank Braxton (posthumously), the first African-American animator, animation director and guild president; and casting director, voice director and voice actress Andrea Romano. The June Foray Award will be presented to veteran animator, Adam Burke (posthumously) for his significant and benevolent impact

on the animation community. Ton Roosendaal, Dutch software developer and film producer, will accept the Ub Iwerks Award for Blender Open Source Animation Software; and a Certificate of Merit was presented to dedicated ASIFA volunteer, Jason Jones.

ASIFA-Hollywood is the world's first and foremost professional organization dedicated to promoting the Art of Animation and celebrating the people who create it. Today, ASIFA-Hollywood, the largest chapter of the international organization ASIFA, supports a range of animation activities and preservation efforts through its membership. Current initiatives include the Animation Archive, Animation Aid Foundation, animated film preservation, special events, classes and screenings. The awards ceremony was created in 1972 by veteran voice talent June Foray. It has grown in scope and stature for the past four decades.



CRITICS CHOICE AWARDS The winner of Best Animated Feature was *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. The runners up were *The Grinch*, *Incredibles 2*, *Isle of Dogs*, *Mirai* and *Ralph Breaks the Internet*. *BoJack Horseman* (Netflix) won The Best Animated Series made for TV. The runners up were *Adventure Time* (Cartoon Network), *Bob's Burgers* (Fox), *The Simpsons* (Fox), *Archer* (FXX) and *South Park* (Comedy Central).



DON LUSK (1913-2018) On December 30, 2018 Jerry Beck wrote, "Disney Legend Don Lusk (1913-2018) has passed away today at age 105 – reported by his dear friend Navah Paskowitz-Asner (Ed Asner's daughter-in-law) on her Facebook page this morning. Lusk was hired by The Walt Disney Company in 1933 and he became an animator in 1938 on *Ferdinand the Bull*. His animation graced key scenes in *Bambi*, *Song*

of the South, *Cinderella*, *Lady and the Tramp*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *One Hundred and One Dalmatians*. He is best known for his work on the Fish Dance in "The Nutcracker Suite" in *Fantasia*, Cleo the goldfish in *Pinocchio*, the title character in *Alice in Wonderland* and Wendy in *Peter Pan*."

"Lusk left Disney in 1960, but continued to work as an animator during the 1960s and 1970s, on UPA's *Gay Purr-ee* (1962), *A Boy Named Charlie Brown* (1969), and freelanced much for Bill Melendez and Walter Lantz studios. He spent 23 years at Hanna-Barbera, directing everything from Scooby Doo to *Yo Yogi!*"

"In the early 1990s, Lusk retired after a career that spanned 60 years. He received a Winsor McCay Award for lifetime achievement at the Annie Awards ceremony in 2015. He was a friend to many in the industry and a legend in the field. He will be sorely missed."



THE PGA AWARDS The nominated films for their best animated feature went to the usual suspects: *Dr. Seuss' The Grinch*, Producers: Chris Meledandri, Janet Healy; *Incredibles 2*, Producers: John Walker, Nicole Grindle; *Isle of Dogs*, Producers: *Eligibility Determination Pending; *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, Producer: Clark Spencer; and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, Producers: Avi Arad, Phil Lord & Christopher Miller, Amy Pascal, Christina Steinberg. And the winner of the 30th annual PGA Award in the animation category was, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. It was handed out on Jan. 19 at a ceremony at the Beverly Hilton.

ACE AWARDS FOR BEST EDITED ANIMATED FEATURE The nominated films are *Isle of Dogs*, Andrew Weisblum, ACE, Ralph Foster & Edward Bursch; *Incredibles 2*, Stephen Schaffer, ACE and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, Robert Fisher Jr. The ceremony takes place Feb. 1 in the ballroom of the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

ACADEMY AWARD ANIMATION NOMINATIONS Animated Feature: *Incredibles 2*, *Isle of Dogs*, *Mirai*, *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. The nominations for best Animated

Short went to *Animal Behaviour*, Alison Snowden and David Fine; *Bao*, Domee Shi and Becky Neiman-Cobb; *Late Afternoon*, Louise Bagnall and Nuria González Blanco, *One Small Step*, Andrew Chesworth and Bobby Pontillas, *Weekends*, Trevor Jimenez.

THE ART DIRECTORS GUILD HAS ANNOUNCED THEIR NOMINATIONS for the 23rd Annual Excellence in Production Design Awards. Competing in the animation category are Colin Stimpson for *Dr. Seuss' The Grinch*, Ralph Eggleston for *Incredibles 2*, Adam Stockhausen and Paul Harrod for *Isle of Dogs*, Cory Loftis for *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, and Justin K. Thompson for *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*. The big night is on Saturday, Feb. 2 at the InterContinental Los Angeles Downtown.

THE GOLDEN GLOBE ANIMATION AWARD WENT TO SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER - VERSE.

DISNEY'S BOB IGER'S PAY HAS SOARED TO \$65.6 MILLION Disney CEO Iger has been given a big increase in compensation thanks to stock awards granted him after he extended his contract in late 2017. He only made \$36.3 million in 2017 and \$43.9 million the year before that. Disney's most recent fiscal year that ended Sept. 29 saw earnings of \$12.6 billion, up 40 percent, on revenue that rose 8 percent to \$59.4 billion.

THINGS YOU PROBABLY DON'T NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STAR WARS LAND. The Disney publicity department will do its best to make sure everybody in the world will know this addition to their park in California will open this summer and a similar attraction will open this fall in Florida. It will feature a spaceport where the Millennium Falcon is docked. That will be the centerpiece of this billion-dollar attraction. I bet that Star Wars fans will stand in line to climb into the pilot's seat of the Millennium Falcon, rub elbows with a bounty hunter in their "disreputable" cantina and wander through a smuggler's alley in search of the perfect intergalactic souvenir. Wow!

Disney is building this 14 acre tourist attraction as they need to compete with Universal's Wizard World of Harry Potter that opened in 2010. To do that they built the largest addition in the history of the Anaheim theme park. When Universal opened Wizarding World it set a new standard for immersive themed lands based on a single intellectual property. Disney responded by opening Cars Land in 2012 and Pandora: World of Avatar at Disney's Animal Kingdom in 2017. Since Universal's magic is still quite powerful, now 4 years after announcing plans to open their Star Wars attraction the moment of truth is about to be realized.

Unless you are a diehard fan you don't need to know where the new land is located in the universe.

Imagineering decided to create a completely new land that allows for new locations to be created in future features or games. That also allows visitors to imagine what unproduced features might be like. The new land will be on the distant planet named Batuu in and around the Black Spire Outpost. Got that? You will be quizzed on that later.

It turns out the Black Spire Outpost will look familiar to Star Wars fans as Star Wars is a franchised product. There will be the usual village cantina full of disreputable characters (smugglers, rogue traders and adventurers) along with a droid repair shop and open-air marketplace selling souvenirs your kids hopefully will crave. The spaceport will have X-Wings, Tie fighters and AT-AT walkers parked there. The Black Spire Outpost will be surrounded by the stumps of once-towering trees that have become spire-like petrified rock formations built at Disney's "faux rock works."

Disney is being vague about describing the rides in the new park. One will supposedly drop you into the middle of outer space battles and the Millennium Falcon: Smuggler's Run flight simulator will puts riders in the cockpit of one of the fastest ships in the galaxy as they battle Imperial Tie fighters "during a secret mission." To get you to ride it more than once there will be multiple story lines. "Imagineers have described the Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance trackless dark ride as the most elaborate and immersive attraction ever built by Disney."

Construction records indicate the Rise of the Resistance trackless dark ride costs \$77.9 million to build while the Millennium Falcon: Smuggler's Run flight simulator ride costs \$55.7 million. The local watering hole costs \$12.5 million to build and a non-flying full-size replica of the Millennium Falcon was going to cost \$4.4 million.

As for food and drink, Oga's Cantina will be the first public location to serve alcohol in Disneyland history. At the Docking Bay 7 counter-service restaurant you might want to buy outer rim delicacies and at Bantha Tracks you might want a refreshing Blue Milk, the drink Luke Skywalker drank in the first Star Wars movie. Disney publicity also says, "What you won't find in Galaxy's Edge is any fast food kids meals, buckets of popcorn or Mickey Mouse-shaped pretzels."

The Toydarian Wares toy shop will sell stuffed Chewbacca, Yoda and Kylo Ren dolls designed to look like they were hand-made by local Black Spire vendors. The Creature Stall shop in the marketplace will be filled with caged animatronic creatures both cute and creepy. Customers will be able to purchase "irresistibly cuddly loth cat dolls from the *Star Wars Rebels* animated television series."

'HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON: THE HIDDEN WORLD' "Hiccup and his fire-breathing Night Fury buddy, Toothless, find themselves facing their biggest

challenge yet: Raging dragon hormones.” The third film will supposedly be the last of this trilogy and the first review calls it a “tender, spirited coming-of-age CG-animated feature that proves every bit as emotionally resonant and artistically rendered as its 2010 and 2014 predecessors, if not even more so.” From the *Hollywood Reporter*.

MARGIE COHN IS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF DREAMWORKS ANIMATION She will head the film and television units. Chris de Faria was the outgoing president of the DreamWorks film unit.

SEE ‘ONE SMALL STEP’ ONLINE Taiko Studios was founded in 2017 by CEO Zhang in both Los Angeles and Wuhan, China. As a truly international company, the studio endeavors to bridge eastern and western cultures together to create memorable stories with universal appeal. <https://www.awn.com/news/watch-taiko-studios-releases-one-small-step-online>



GREEK ANIMATION ROCKS - 1st ATHENS ANIMATION AGORA, 22 – 24 September 2018, Athens, Greece by Nancy Denney-Phelps

Animasyros is a major Greek animation festival held on the island of Syros at the end of September.

In 2018 they also held the first Athens Animation Agora symposium three days prior to the festival. The symposium brought together an international network of creative professionals so the days were packed full of presentations, pitching sessions and roundtable discussions with experts who really knew their stuff.

Seven works in progress were pre-selected to be pitched at Athens Animation Agora. Prior to the directors presenting their pitches they attended two sessions of *Scripting Your Perfect Pitch* with Tunde Vollenbroek. Tunde is a producer at Studio Pupil in

Amsterdam, so she has had a great deal of experience pitching projects.

I found several of the projects extremely interesting. *The Classmate* by Anastasia Dimitra will be a six-minute 2D pixilation film. The story revolves around a teenage girl who is dealing with life via her diary entries. She observes and analyzes a classmate’s bad behavior because it symbolizes everything that she does not want to be. As the girl grows up the memories of her classmate become the version of herself that she doesn’t want to face.

Thomas Kunstler pitched his feature film *Markos* which is in early development. It is a biographical stop motion project following the extraordinary life of Markos Vamvaka from his youth in Syros, Greece to fame in Athens and his eventual decline. Markos was the most renowned rebetiko musician in Greece. Rebetiko is an integral part of Greek culture, often called the “Blues of Greece”. Director Kunstler plans for his 105-minute film to have an international release.

Polyphemus, pitched by twin brothers Yiannis and Konstantinos Andrias, was the project that I found most intriguing. The giant Polyphemus was the son of Poseidon and Thoosa in Greek mythology and one of the Cyclops described in Homer’s *Odyssey*.

The brothers want to bring Greek legends to life with a new twist, telling Polyphemus’ story from his point of view. The 26-minute animation begins 33 days after Polyphemus was blinded by Odysseus.

After the blinding, the legendary supervillain Polyphemus has to face new challenges and prove that he is worthy of his name which means abounding in songs and legends. The film will be a combination of 3D animation with keyframe animation and motion capture. After seeing a small clip from the film I look forward to watching the completed film in the future.

Three of the pitched projects were selected by Tunde and Agora organizer Mak Kritikou to be presented at the official Pitching Forum at Animasyros 11. The three projects selected were *Find Me, With Love* directed by Effie Pappa, *Markos* by Thomas Kunstler, and XinXin Liu’s *Toto’s House*.

Find Me, With Love is planned as a ten-minute stop-motion animation about Alzheimer’s and lost memories. At the other end of the spectrum, *Toto’s House* is designed to be twelve episodes of five minutes each. XinXin explained the series as characters from famous paintings that visit Toto and his dog Huge at their home. It looked extremely colorful and absurd.

Along with the pitching sessions, the three-day event was packed full of presentations and roundtable discussions. I had an opportunity to spend time with Sophia Madouvalou and Aristarchos Papadaniel and to learn about their project *A Letter – A Story* before they presented it as part of the Kids Content Roundtable.

Sofia is a noted Greek children's book author. *A Letter – A Story* is an interactive web-based animated multimedia learning series based on her artwork and directed by Aristarchos. Its aim is to support the teaching of the Greek alphabet to kindergartner and first graders. Children are familiarized with the letters and sounds of the alphabet through games based on 24 five minute episodes which correspond to the 24 letters of the Greek alphabet.

A Letter – A Story is designed to be used in the classroom by teachers via an interactive whiteboard and/or by students in a computer lab or with a parent at home. Although designed specifically for children, it could be used by anyone who wants to learn Greek. Sophia told me that she received letters from all over the world from people who have used *A Letter – A Story* to teach themselves Greek. It has also been used by people of Greek origin who live in other parts of the world to teach their native language to their children.

Erik Tijman, head of film and television at Cinekid Festival was also a member of the Kid's Content Roundtable. Cinekid Festival is the largest children's media festival in the world. Located in Amsterdam, Cinekid is designed for kids from 4 to 14 years old to watch film, television, and new video productions. They can also explore the Media Lab which extends over 1,200 square meters and is filled with interactive art installations, workshops, games, and apps. Erik also explained that Cinekid is not just a festival. During the year Cinekid travels throughout the Netherlands to bring film and workshops to young people. Cinekid for Professionals is an international multi-day event for the children's media industry running concurrent to the festival.

Another interesting project aimed primarily at children and young people, but relevant to all ages is *Save Your Planet*. Tassos Kotsiras has created a humorous, easy to understand animated series about the environment. The aim of the series is to raise awareness of ever-increasing environmental problems and show people how they can make small changes in their lives that will collectively make a difference in the environment for future generations in an entertaining, non-preachy manner.

TV Paint, an all-inclusive, all-around tool for the creation of traditional 2D animation, was the topic of the Software Showcase. Mark Mullery, Technical Director at Ireland's Cartoon Saloon, gave an in-depth presentation on the uses of TV Paint in their 2D animated feature film *The Breadwinner*. Mark told us that the film was the work of over 100 artists across three countries and the fruit of both 21st Century technology (TV Paint) and age-old hand-drawn techniques. He is currently the assistant director on Tomm Moore's upcoming feature film *Wolfwalkers*.

In honor of Mark Mullery and Cartoon Saloon's participation in Athens Animation Agora Marianne Bolger, Deputy Head of Mission at the Irish Embassy in Greece, gave a short presentation about Ireland. That was followed by Mark introducing a special screening of *The Breadwinner*.

Nora El Bekri, French sales agent for TV Paint, also gave a brief overview of the uses for her product.

I was extremely pleased to be invited to moderate the Festival Round Table Discussion. Joining me were Karin Vandenrydt, Sanja Cakarun, Fernando Galrito, and Charalambos Margaritis.

Karin Vandenrydt is a programmer at ANIMA BRUSSELS in Belgium. ANIMA BRUSSELS operates in both French and Flemish which, along with German, are the official Belgian languages. Along with programming for the festival, Karin takes care of the Flemish-speaking guests as well as the juries.

Sanja Cakarun is head of Public Relations and Audience Development at Animateka in Ljubljana, Slovenia. In 2000 Fernando Galrito founded Monstra in Lisbon, Portugal. He is the artistic director of the festival as well as its guiding light. Last but not least Charalambos Margaritis founded the international animation festival The Animattikon Project in 2017 which takes place in Paphos, Cyprus.

We began our discussion with each participant giving a brief statement about the character of their festival and what makes it unique since every festival has its own character. We went on to discuss specific programming styles and methods that the various festivals use to build and retain an audience as well as the type of year around outreach programs each festival engages in. How to program for specific audiences such as teenagers generated a lively discussion. Because the teenage audience covers such a wide age difference, they are particularly difficult to program for. For anyone interested in how festivals work, from selection processes to the actual screenings, there was a lot to learn from this panel. Anima Brussels is in its 36th year while Animattikin Project was founded in 2017, so the discussion represented a wide range of experience and knowledge.

The first public screening of a Greek animated film was *Duce Narrates*, a short film by Stamatis Polenakis in 1945. The anti-fascist satirical film was made during the German-Italian occupation of Greece and heralded the heroic resistance of the Greek Army against the Italian invasion via Albania in 1940 at the beginning of World War II.

2015 was the 70th Anniversary of Greek animation and in honor of the event, ASIFA (Association Internationale du Film D'Animation) Hellas published *70 Years of Greek Animation*, a 220-page book covering the history of Greek animation. The book thoroughly traces the development of animation in the country from

its inception to 2015 with detailed text and lavish illustrations. There is also a timeline which records film release dates and distinctions along with texts of lectures and interviews. *70 Years of Greek Animation* is an excellent addition to the library of any animation historian as well as a fascinating read for anyone interested in animation. It is written in Greek on one side of the page with a well translated English version on the other side. You can learn more about the book and order it at: info@greekanimation.com

A special website was created for the 70th Anniversary celebration. It is an attempt to register all of the countries' animations along with their creators. There is also a section for production companies, festivals, and awards. You can check out the site at: greekanimation.com

The Greek animation industry has come back strong despite the recent financial crisis. One illustration of this success is the close relationship between Greece and France, a country that holds a prominent place in the field of animation. The French Embassy and the French Institute of Greece have been staunch supporters of the Animasyros Festival and have now offered their support to Athens Animation Agora. At the opening session of the symposium, Christopher Chantepy, French Ambassador to Greece, gave a welcoming speech. On another evening, Ambassador Chantepy and Monsieur Olivier Dovernne from Mazinnov hosted all of the Agora participants at a sumptuous reception at the elegant French Embassy.

Mazinnov is a French-Greek network designed to connect ideas, projects, and people in order to match creative people in many different fields with entrepreneurs in both countries.

All of the sessions of Athens Animation Agora were held in the lovely Onassis Cultural Center. This first edition of Agora was an initiative of the General Secretariat of Information and Communication of the Ministry of Digital Policy and Animasyros International Animation Festival in cooperation with the Onassis Cultural Center. The symposium was made possible thanks to the support of the French Embassy in Athens, the French-Greek Innovation Network Mazinnov, the Delegation of the European Commission in Greece, and the National Center of Audiovisual Media and Communications.

The day after the symposium most of the participants left by ferry for the isle of Syros and ANIMASYROS. I was not able to attend this year because I flew straight to Bristol, England where I was on the animation jury of the Encounters Festival, but more about that in my next article.

I extend my great thanks to Marineta Mak Kritikou, Athens Animation Agora coordinator, and everyone connected with the symposium for inviting me to be part of the event. Their warm and generous hospitality was

far beyond my expectations. Even more important, the event has given me a greater understanding of Greek animation and of the opportunities open to Greek animators. I feel like the symposium was such a success this year and hope that there will be a 2019 edition.

For details about Athens Animation Agora and Animasyros visit www.animasyros.gr



24th ENCOUNTERS FESTIVAL **September 25 – 30, 2018, Bristol, England** **by Nancy Denney-Phelps**

When I was invited to be on the jury of the *Encounters Festival* I had no idea that it encompassed so many different programs. Being both a live action and an animated short film festival the schedule was packed with film programs of every description. Along with the Animation Jury, there were 6 other separate juries covering everything from Brief Encounters, Immersive Encounters, Children's Films, Deaf Shorts, Young People's Films, to the Depict Works. There were short film competition programs and the Immersive Encounters competition awarded their winner 2,000 pounds. Immersive Encounters, created in 2017, showcases a mixed media program of thought-provoking documentary, dance, music videos, animation, and fictional film.

The competition for and about deaf people was in its third year. It was created to increase the awareness of films about and by deaf people. To honor the 100th anniversary of women receiving the right to vote in England, all of the leading ladies roles in the program Deaf Shorts: Sister Act were played by deaf women.

Along with my fellow jurors Aneta Ozorek, Artistic Director of the KLIK Animation Festival and award-winning animator Nina Gantz, I watched 6 programs that were strictly animation. The 71 films that we watched were selected from 550 submissions in the animation category. Other programs included some animation with the live action shorts which were not eligible for the awards we were giving.

Our six programs were organized around themes. Program 1 was Other Worlds, films that “transport you to deep space and beyond where memories and emotions collide in alternative and hyper-realities” according to the catalogue. In this program, I liked *The Market of Lost Things*. The film by Swiss animators Zaide Kutay and Christelle Serrano tells the story of a girl who wakes up one day without her face and needs to find a new one. Where can she possibly go to find one? The market turns out to be a place where creatures of all sorts gather to find mislaid and forgotten objects. Zaide and Christelle made the film with students at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. The university’s film department is known for its excellent, often quirky, student films. This film has nice character design and I especially liked the background designs which combined interesting patterns and designs with a vast array of colors. Trailer at Veemo.com/231298272

Program 2, Happy Sad, was exactly what the title implies. *Wildebeest* fit in this category perfectly. It is a very strong film that has won numerous international awards. Belgian directors Nicolas Keppens and Matthias Philips begin the 19-minute film in a very upbeat mood with the main characters Linda and Troyer going on their dream holiday, an African safari. It all turns terribly wrong when the couple gets left behind in the wilderness. The film is full of sardonic Belgian humor with a very serious point to it: Just who benefits from these Ecotourism and safari camera trips?



In awarding *Wildebeest* the Animation Grand Prix, our jury said “This is a film that addresses a very serious subject with an incredible sense of humor. It was

obvious to the jury that the creators of this film treated their characters with respect and love.



What would you do if you were told that you had an incurable disease and did not have long to live? Sunniva Fluge Hole offers a look into one woman’s answer to that question in her animation *Liv*. Instead of just waiting to die, Liv takes matters into her own hands and goes to the mountains to live out the rest of her days in the wilderness and have the freedom to choose how and when she will die. *Liv* is Sunniva’s graduation film from the Art University Bournemouth, England. The characters are done in 2D (ToonBoom Harmony) but what really makes the film are the story and the beautiful hand-drawn backgrounds.

The 4th Program was titled Heterotopia. The term is a concept by philosopher Michael Foucault to describe cultural, institutional, and discursive spaces that are ‘other’: disturbing, intense, incompatible, contradictory or transforming. There were several films in this program that fit that description and made a lasting impression on me.

Estonian animator Ulo Pikkov consistently creates films that stay with me long after my first viewing of them. His *Letting Go (Lahtilask Mise Lugu)* is no exception. The premise of the film is based on the Japanese belief that by releasing a paper doll into the sea a person lets go of an evil spirit. This multi-layered animated documentary is about a young girl, Agnes, from an orphanage who wants to let go of the shadows that haunt her. The dolls in their hypnotic dance are made of bad memories which can pierce your heart like a nail. The film captures the essence of what it can mean to be an orphan.

In *Room* by Michal Socha from Poland, the room is a geometric space drifting freely in space. Inside of the room, there are no windows, doors, or furniture, only a bodiless head that is constantly trying to get out of the confining space. *Room* employs a surreal style to represent the passage of time and a situation where there is no way out of. The film kept my attention until a color sequence popped up which was unnecessary and broke the spell of the black and white film for me. <http://michalsocha.com/portfolio/room-animation/>

Program 5, Rhyme, Rhythm, and Reason was all about where not making sense makes perfect sense. This program contained one of the most unbelievably, outrageously, improbably funny, yet sweet animated films that I hadn't seen in a long time. In awarding the Encounters Best of British Animation Award to the Brothers McLeod, Greg and Myles, for their film *Marfa* we said "The jury has no idea how two British guys could go to Bum Fuck Egypt, a WWII army expression that means the middle of nowhere, with no disrespect meant to Egypt) which certainly applies to Marfa, Texas and captures the heart and soul of a small Texas town so perfectly".

The film, which debuted at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival was inspired by an unexpected stay in Marfa when illustrator Gary and writer Myles had their car break down in the town while on their way to the West Coast. The film also screened at the 2018 Marfa Film Festival.

Located in a remote corner of far West Texas, Marfa with a population of fewer than 2,000 people is an unlikely place to hold a film festival, but they do hold one every year. Even more improbable is the fact that this sun-drenched desert town has become an art mecca. *Giant* and *There Will Be Blood* were filmed in Marfa. The town is also home to the strange phenomena called the Marfa Lights. Numerous people including famous meteorologists have reported seeing seemingly sourceless lights dance on the horizon southeast of the town in an area that is nearly uninhabited and very difficult to get to. The mysterious lights are sometimes blue, sometimes white, and appear randomly throughout the night regardless of the weather. They can be seen year-round from the viewing platform outside of town.

I have passed through Marfa though I have never been there long enough to capture its essence as fully as the BAFTA-winning McLeod Brothers did with Greg's witty hand-drawn illustrations and the catchy dialogue, interviews, and poetry that Myles created for the film. They have also put out a book, *Marfa: The Book of the Film*, with drawings and some captions from the film.



Our jury awarded a Special Mention to *Obon*. Obon is a Japanese Buddhist festival where a person honors the spirit of one's ancestors. The film is a

German/Japanese production by Andre Hormann and Samo (Anna Bergmann). In this animated documentary Akiko Takakura, one of the last remaining survivors of the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima, receives the spirits of her parents during Obon and is haunted by memories of how in the midst of the terror and suffering all around her she found a rare moment of closeness with her strict, authoritarian father. Director Hormann says that the film is all about Akiko finally experiencing at the age of 19 what it means to receive fatherly affection.

Akiko is 1 of only 10 people within a radius of 500 meters from ground zero to have survived the atomic bomb blast. Her friend and colleague Satomi Usami, who was next to her when the bomb went off, died in the blast while Akiko survived by sheer luck. She remembers extraordinary details of that terrible day and her stories bring them to life. She is now 92 and still lives in Hiroshima.

Akiko's story is very powerfully told and given the world situation today it is very relevant. The animation is beautifully done and the musical score created and performed by Berlin-based composer Daniel Regenberg adds just the right note to the film. To get the rather eerie effect on the soundtrack Daniel plucked the strings of his grand piano like it was a harp. He then recorded the sounds and layered them over each other. We unanimously agreed to give a Special Mention "to a film that captures a well-known part of history in a unique and personal way".

I've always gotten a great laugh from John Waters' Scratch and Sniff films but I had never imagined Wallace and Gromit in Smell-O-Vision. Encounters in partnership with Anima 18 presented Scratch 'N Sniff Cinema at the festival where you could not only watch *Wallace and Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit* but smell it in all its glorious Smell-O-Vision too.

From stinking Bishop to Bunny Burps, the audience immersed its senses in the duo's first feature-length film from the very creative people at Aardman. According to *Curse of the Were-Rabbit* creative director Merlin Crossingham "We spend ages working on how our films look and sound because that is how cinema works. Entertainment for your eyes and ears. So having the ability to add smell to the cinematic experience is tantalizing, your nose will be left out no longer."

Yes. Aardman has taken Wallace and Gromit into the world of Smell-O-Vision. At the festival audience members were given a special card containing weird and wonderful smells linked to scenes in *Wallace and Gromit: Curse of the Were-Rabbit*, taking us into another dimension. Scratch and sniff is back!

I knew that Aardman had developed a Virtual Reality department but I didn't realize that Bristol is in the vanguard of creative Virtual Reality production. According to the National Immersion Economy report, Bristol is one of the United Kingdom's top cities for

creative VR. The UK Tech Innovation Index ranked it as one of the UK's most innovative cities also. Cutting edge creative VR work is emerging from the city and beginning to gain international recognition.

Limina Immersive is a company that provides portable VR equipment to venues. At Encounters, they created a Virtual Reality theatre. The program spotlighted VR projects from 6 Bristol producers with projects that covered a diverse area of subjects.

VR has become much more interesting to me now that it is being used to tell stories. Unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to see all 6 VR pieces but I am very glad that I saw *We Sing In Blood and Fire* by the multi-talented writer, director, and animator Hazel Grian. In her 12 minute VR opera she celebrates how a community comes to terms with extreme violence.

One night several years ago, alone in her home in Bristol, Hazel was brutally attacked by an intruder and left for dead as her house burned. In her extremely stirring VR experience, Hazel shares with us the citywide response to her attack. *Sing In Fire and Blood* is a work in progress, the first part of a series of VR pieces.

Sisterhood: Is Anna OK? From Aardman and BBC Studio directed by Camila Ruz took the viewer on an emotional journey to piece together both sides of a true story, stepping into the shoes of twin sisters Anna and Lauren to discover how their lives were changed in an instant after an accident.

Animation and live action film programs were featured in Country Focus, programs from Georgia, Ghana, and Italy. Georgia has a rich tradition of producing short animation. In 1983 director Davit Takaishvili won the Palm d' Or at Cannes for his film *Chiri (Plague)*. In the film, one color assumes power over all the other colors and destroys them. In the end, the dominating color dies in its one color world.



More recently Ana Chubinidze's 2016 film *The Pocket Man* has won numerous awards at animation festivals worldwide. In her film, a little man lives in a suitcase on the sidewalk. After his home is repeatedly kicked over by a stranger the little man discovers that the culprit is blind and his preconceptions about the man

were all wrong. The little man jumps into the blind man's pocket and with the assistance of his "musical straw" he helps his new friend avoid obstacles on the sidewalk when they are out walking together. *The Pocket Man* is the first Georgian, French, Swiss co-production.

I am particularly fond of Georgian animator Sandro Katamashvili's ode to his grandmother *Bebo (Granny)*. Set in a Georgian town on a warm night, Granny sits at her sewing machine working hard to sew an endless piece of cloth as life goes on around her. Sandro told me that the film was inspired by the memory of his grandmother on just such a night.

The program was organized in conjunction with the Georgian National Film Center, and Encounters hosted a delegation of Georgian Filmmakers and professionals from Tbilisi City Council. Tbilisi is the capital of Georgia. There was a Georgian drinks reception where I had the chance to meet members of the Georgian delegation.

Along with the Accra Animation Film Festival, Encounters presented a program of animated shorts from all over Africa. Accra Festival is held every July in Accra, Ghana. The festival focuses on supporting and promoting African animators by giving them a platform to showcase their work. The 7-day festival included screenings of films from many nations, along with cultural programs and master classes.

The day after the African screenings there was a West African Breakfast where I got to meet the members of the Ghanaian delegation. This was followed by the Ghanaian Animation Talk which focused on the animation industry in Africa and opportunities that are available there.

The animation jury was invited to visit Aardman Studio Headquarters on Gas Ferry Road. Aneta, Nina and I got to peek behind the scenes to see where all of the magic happens. The lobby alone is worth a visit. Along with the ten foot Shaun the Sheep and other members of the sheep family, Bitzer, a very special dog, looks at you over the famous stone wall. A large Gromit and Morph are there to greet you at the door and all the other famous characters are scattered around the lobby. As you walk down the hall to the studios the walls are lined with photos from the early days of Aardman and framed original artwork from various projects such as the 2007 short *Pierce Sisters* by Luis Cook. The film won a BAFTA for Cook, a director at Aardman.



The most fun part of the studio was the model building area which was chock-full of familiar characters. There was a box containing Wallace's numerous mouths, characters from *Creature Comforts* and thousands of other things to see. Too much to take in, really. Aardman does not offer tours to the public so I felt very privileged that we were invited for a private tour.

As exciting as the studio visit was, my personal tour to see the well-known characters to be auctioned off for Aardman's Wallace and Gromit's Grand Appeal was even more exciting. This year Feathers McGraw has joined Wallace and Gromit to raise money for Bristol Children's Hospital and Special Care Baby Unit at St. Michael's Hospital.

66 sculptures of the three characters were decorated by such well-known people as Wes Anderson, Amy Timms, and Peter Lord. Nick Park even gave Feathers McGraw a new look. All of the pieces were on display at locations throughout Bristol from 2 July to 2 September so the public could follow a trail around the city and get a close up look at them. This year the trail had a story. The criminal mastermind penguin Feathers McGraw was on the loose again and the dynamic duo, alias Wallace and Gromit were out to track him down. Following the viewing, the sculptures were taken to a special tent erected behind The Mall at Cribbs which is quite a ways out from downtown Bristol. I was taken to The Mall where I got to have a private tour. I could sit on a bench with a life-sized Wallace and pet the amazing Gromit. This was a true highlight of my visit to Bristol that I will never forget. A few weeks later the auction raised over £1.62 million for the hospital.

Over the 6 days of Encounters, there were so many exciting films that it was impossible to see everything but the programs and events that I did attend were excellent. The festival home is in Watershed Cinema located in former warehouses on the harbor side of the River Avon. It is a great place for a festival with several

screening rooms, multi-use areas and a restaurant that serves delicious food and drink.

I want to thank Festival Director Rich Warren and Animation Programmer Kieran Argo for inviting me to be a member of the Animation Jury. Kieran took very good care of Aneta, Nina, and me treating us to delicious meals at lovely restaurants and providing us with a fine selection of Bristol beer. A very big thank you goes to Kieran for arranging our tour of Aardman and my trip to see the Auction sculptures.

You can learn more about the 2018 festival and how to submit your film to the 2019 edition at: www.encounters-festival.org.uk

From Bristol, I flew directly to Moscow to join the KROK boat for a very special edition which I will tell you about in my next article.

ASIFA-SF'S FIRST PRESIDENT REMEMBERS STAN LEE

My friend Geraldine Clarke (Frerks) writes "my first job at Marvel was as post-production supervisor (breaking my first of many glass ceilings there) on the *Spiderman* series. Not having been a devotee of comic books I had to run to the ink and paint department to get color models of the characters so I could supervise the telecine."

"When I was working for Marvel Stan was quite absent-minded and would put his briefcase on his car's roof as he searched for his keys. Then he would drive off. Many times I ran after his car, banging on the trunk, to get him to stop and retrieve his briefcase."

"Stan was a really nice man, a real gentleman even when I was banging on his car to let him know that he'd left his briefcase on the roof."

"Lots of glass ceilings there. When the head of the ink and paint department died no one from management except me went to her funeral. Sic transit Marvel."

"I went on to get a couple of Emmys for producing *Rugrats* which would have been absolutely inconceivable for a mere female to do back when I was in grad school at SF State."

Geraldine graduated from SF State and worked at Imagination Inc. on lots of shows including *Sesame Street*. She was also involved with the founding of our ASIFA chapter along with Prescott Wright, Bud Luckey and Jeff and Margaret Hale.

"I was the President for the first 5 years or so. I had been an impoverished grad student, but being an ASIFA President, I managed to get to all the festivals at Annecy and Zagreb where I would get free room and board. They would always put me up next to June Foray, the Hollywood ASIFA President, so we became good friends. I house-sat for her several times, taking care of her Great Danes who were all bigger than she was."



LEE UNKRICH HAS RETIRED

Lee Unkrich, the Oscar-winning director behind *Toy Story 3* and *Coco*, is leaving Pixar Animation Studios.

The move marks an end of an era as Unkrich has been at the Emeryville, California-based studio for 25 years, joining the company when it was making its inaugural feature, *Toy Story*, on which he served as an editor. He then went on to co-direct some of the company's early outings, which are now considered classics — *Toy Story 2*, *Monsters, Inc.* and *Finding Nemo* — before taking the reins solo with the billion dollar-grossing *Toy Story 3*.

Lee told Pixar employees, "I'm not leaving to make films at another studio; instead, I look forward to spending much-needed time with my family and pursuing interests that have long been on the back-burner."

Unkrich is leaving on a high note: *Coco* made over \$807 million worldwide and won the best animated feature Academy Award at the 2018 Oscar ceremonies. He is said not to have started on any new projects.

SEE A LOVELY FILM ABOUT BIRDS FROM CHINA A nice aesthetic experience that is totally different from *Spider-Man*. This student film maintains a lovely mood until you get to the unexpected ending. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1ScWgYjG0k>

DOES DISNEY HAVE A TRANSGENDER STAR? They are recasting the role of Olaf, the snowman in their Broadway production of *Frozen*? Ryann Redmond will be the first woman to play the snowman. Olaf was voiced by Josh Gad in the film.

GKIDS WILL DISTRIBUTE THE CAMBODIAN ANIMATED DRAMATIC FEATURE 'FUNAN' THIS SPRING The film won awards last year at Annecy and Animation Is Film. It explores the cruel Khmer Rouge that came to power in the 1970s. A trailer and article is at <https://www.indiewire.com/2019/01/gkids-funan-animated-oscars-1202035669/>

VISUAL EFFECTS SOCIETY nominates for Best VFX in an Animated Feature *Dr. Seuss' The Grinch*,

Incredibles 2, *Isle of Dogs*, *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*.



'RUBEN BRANDT, COLLECTOR' opens March 1 at the Embarcadero Center Cinema in San Francisco, Landmark Shattuck in Berkeley and Aquarius Theatre in Palo Alto. It is a surreal work of art set in the future. It has a fast moving action-adventure plot with bizarre film noir touches. It reaches exciting climaxes and there is a remarkable woman in it that is just as impressive and athletic as Aeon Flux. None of the cast has a traditional looking face (shades of Picasso and other artists). I loved the film, but it may be far too weird and confusing for people who insist that a film must have a traditional narrative and a traditional looking cast. It is a truly fresh experience seeing this innovative work of art. KC

WATCH THE ANNIE AWARDS, LIVE! Sat. Feb. 2, 7pm <http://annieawards.org/watch-it-live/>

Don't forget - PAY WHAT YOU WISH DAY AT THE CARTOON ART MUSEUM IN S.F. EVERY TUESDAY AND THURSDAY IN FEBRUARY, 2019, Open 11 AM to 5 PM. 781 Beach St. (near the cable car turn-around). Lots of animation art from their collection on display.

'HOLLYWOOD REPORTER' PANS 'LEGO 2' "This sequel to the acclaimed 2014 blockbuster has lost much of the original's irresistible snap. Even if you were to factor in the uphill challenge of replicating that giddy blast of inventiveness that was the 2014 original — and, to a somewhat diminished extent, the 2017 Lego Batman spinoff — *The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part* can't help but feel like a flimsy, unlicensed knockoff."

"Replaying many of the visual gags that worked so amusingly before, the latest edition proves every bit as repetitive and uninspired as its glib title, bringing little that's fresh or funny to the interlocking brick table despite boasting a script penned by originators Phil Lord

and Christopher Miller.” The review goes on and on without saying anything positive.



Left to right David Ellison, Skip Brittenham and John Lasseter

HOW JOHN LASSETER GOT HIS NEW JOB It turns out getting hired is often a matter of whom you know and in John’s case it was Skip Brittenham, a Hollywood deal maker and a close friend of the Ellison family. Skip was also one of the guys who brokered the deal in 1991 to get a young startup company in the Bay Area a feature contract with Disney. That startup group was called Pixar.

Skip was attracted to Pixar by Steve Jobs who offered him a seat on Pixar’s board because of his Hollywood connections. It turns out Skip also represents David Ellison who is Larry Ellison’s son and who owns a startup animation studio named Skydance. And there is yet another close friendship connection, Skip’s daughter Kristina is married to Jesse Sigsold, the president of Skydance.

Rebecca Keegan on the *Hollywood Reporter’s* staff pieced this puzzle together and also looked into additional information. As for Skydance hiring a firm to investigate independently the claims of Pixar’s women who were troubled by John’s behavior, they hired two lawyers from the firm Venable, but found scant evidence as to how thorough their investigation was. Rebecca found one person who described his interview with the lawyers as “a perfunctory conversation,” and she said other people she contacted that were familiar with the allegations had not been contacted.

Rebecca also noted that Skydance was a privately owned company so there wouldn’t be a troublesome board member or shareholder objecting to their hiring Lasseter. So as long as John doesn’t do anything controversial he has the full support of Skydance’s owners and executives.

John is 62 so if he wishes to stay active being a creative person he should have a solid new career ahead of him. If he gets bored or screws up he can retire and enjoy being a gentleman wine maker if he keeps his property in the Bay Area. Don’t forget as the creative head of Pixar he became a multi-millionaire.

ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION

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Special thanks to **Nancy Denney-Phelps** for representing our chapter on the international ASIFA board, to **Emily Berk** our webmaster, to **Eihway Su** who keeps our mailing list and other records and to our treasurer **Karen Lithgow**.

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 only want the issue e-mailed to you

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