

ASIFA-SF NEWSLETTER, APRIL 2017

S.F. STATES ANIMATION SOCIETY AND  
ASIFA-SF PRESENT



# CAREERS IN ANIMATION

SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2 PM, SF  
STATE,

FREE, PUBLIC INVITED, FINE ARTS BUILDING 101, COPPOLA  
THEATRE

Our panelists will be

**Jamie Burton**

He's working on the game Skylanders at Toys for Bob in  
Petaluma

- <http://toysforbob.com/>

**Norm DeCarlo**

Art Director, Sculptor, Stop-motion  
Credits include Nightmare Before Christmas, Toy Story 1 &  
2, The Matrix, Gumby, Monsters, Inc.  
<http://normdecarlo.com/sculpture.html>

## **Janelle Hessig**

Animator, video editor and social media specialist  
She works at KQED in their Film School Shorts Program

## **Jonathan Lyons**

He has worked locally at ILM, Tippett, Image Movers  
Digital and The Orphanage. See his award winning film  
and sample reel at  
<http://stupix.com>

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APRIL 2017



Cover cartoon by Ricci Carrasquillo



Pixar's *Coco* looks like it might be a smash hit if it opens Nov. 22, but the trailer that was put online in early March was taken down a few days later probably because some people felt the trailer suggested it might be too similar to Jorge Gutierrez's feature *The Book of Life* that was released in 2014. Both films honor Mexico's day of the Dead and like Gutierrez's feature it appears to be a respectful fantasy, not a cute, silly dumbed down film for kids under five.

The first article I saw about the Pixar film quoted voice actor Anthony Gonzalez as saying, "This isn't a dream then — you're all really out there." His role is Miguel, an aspiring musician whose family has banished members from playing music for generations. Desperate to prove his talent he finds himself in a beautiful, colorful Land of the Dead. Following a mysterious chain of events he finds himself on a journey to unlock the real story of his family's history. The film is being directed by Lee Unkrich (*Toy Story 3*). I hope that after the executives make changes it will open on time.

**ANIMATION AT THE 60th SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL** The longest-running film festival in the Americas, the San Francisco International Film Festival (SFFILM Festival) is an extraordinary showcase of cinematic discovery and innovation in one of the country's most beautiful cities. The 60th edition runs April 5–19 at venues across the Bay Area and features nearly 200 films and live events, 14 juried awards with close to \$40,000 in cash prizes, and upwards of 100 participating filmmaker guests.

### **Shorts 3: Animation**

*What do Mary Pickford stumbling her way through a collage-driven nightmare of the mind, an invincible girl on a bike weaving through rumbling dinosaurs and falling asteroids to the beat of a Mexican folk ballad, and a nervous 14-year old in talking pajamas dealing with his first summer camp have in common? They are all but a small sampling of the impossibly imaginative sights and sounds that await you in Shorts 3: Animation!*

***Broken – The Women’s Prison at Hoheneck*** Political imprisonment, forced labor, and isolation are recalled in this animated documentary that recounts several stories from prisoners of the women’s facility, Hoheneck, in East Germany. By Alexander Lahl, Volker Schlecht, Germany.

***Edge of Alchemy*** A gothic re-imagining of the Frankenstein story using exquisite cutout animation and archival film as two silent film actresses are mystically transformed. Stacey Steers, USA.

***Everything*** From summersaulting bears, lions, and dancing giraffes to the microorganisms up to space, we are all connected, everything goes together, and everything you see is everything you can be. By David OReilly, USA.

***History of Magic: Ensueño*** With her bike and a mixtape, Esther escapes her West Texas town by transforming her everyday into the extraordinary. By José Luis González, USA.

***Hot Dog Hands*** Cursed with hot dogs for fingers, a young woman is shunned from her hometown only to find that in the most surprising place, her burden is actually a gift. Matt Reynolds, USA.

***Summer Camp Island*** At this summer camp, pajamas can talk, marshmallows can sing, and there are no parents, but all Oscar wants is to spend a normal night with Hedgehog, his friend and summertime crush. By Julia Pott, USA 2016.

***Second to None*** With a trophy awarded to the oldest man, being the second oldest is unacceptable in this black comedy where the only way to win is to outlive your opponent. Vincent Gallagher, Ireland.

***Victor + Isolina*** He said, she said. Different sides of the same story—of why Victor and Isolina separated after 50 years together—are argued between the divided screen. By Willian D. Caballero, USA.

**Shorts 3: Animation** screens **Sunday April 9, 8:30 pm** and **Sunday April 16, 3:15 pm** at **Roxie Theater**. Total running time 75 min.

## Shorts 5: Family Films

Shorts 5: Family Films includes lots of films new to Bay Area screens. Only *Pearl*, which had an Oscar nomination, and *Perched* have been shown here before. Program includes Pixar's newest short *Lou* as well as the Academy nominated *Pearl*. As a special treat filmmakers from four of the animated shorts in this program, *Pearl*, *Father and Daughter*, *Lou*, and *Summer Camp Island*, will be present to answer questions and meet you after the screening. One will be Nick Cross who worked on *Summer Camp Island* and previously on *Over the Garden Wall*.

***Father and Daughter*** Not many children who dream of a career in sports go on to find success. The rare few who do commit to a life of sacrifice and devotion. In this beautifully hand-drawn tale, a young girl dedicates her life to reach the top in the competitive world of gymnastics. Throughout all the trials and tribulations, her adoring father is always there by her side. By Xie Chenglin, China.

***The Inspector and the Umbrella*** Inspector Frigg is ready to tackle another day in the big city. With rain in the forecast, an umbrella will certainly be a required accessory. Unfortunately, no one informed the umbrella. By Maël Gourmelen, France.

***Lou*** The latest gem from Pixar tells the story of an overbearing young schoolboy who constantly pesters his classmates during recess. A hidden adversary to the playground nuisance lies patiently waiting in the bottom of the lost-and-found box, formulating a plan. By Dave Mullins, USA.

***Pearl*** Recently nominated for an Academy Award, this musical road movie follows a girl and her dad as they crisscross the country, growing up, and chasing their dreams, all from their home inside the family car, a beat up hatchback. By Patrick Osborne, USA.

***Perched*** A reclusive old man lives a life of seclusion inside his submarine balanced precariously atop a mountain. A visit from an unwelcomed feathered visitor sends his carefully managed existence into a tailspin, allowing him to see things from a whole new perspective. By Liam Harris, United Kingdom 2016.

***Summer Camp Island*** At this summer camp, pajamas can talk, marshmallows can sing, and there are no parents, but all Oscar wants is to spend a normal night with Hedgehog, his friend and summertime

crush. By Julia Pott, USA.

**Shorts 5: Family Films** screens **Friday April 14, 10:00 am, Saturday April 15, 10:00 am, Monday April 17, 10:00 am, and Tuesday April 18 at 10:00 am** at the **Castro Theatre**. Total running time 65 min. Recommended for ages 5 and up.

The festival is also presenting other programs that include some animation along with educational programs for kid that will discuss on animation and special effects. For more information visit [sffilm.org](http://sffilm.org).

**ANIMATION AT THE GREEN FILM FEST 2017 AT THE ROXIE APRIL 20 - 26, 2017** The festival includes a full program of animated ecology films from Russia and other program that include animated shorts.

#### **ECO-ANIMATION FROM RUSSIA**

The Russian eco-animation program will be at the Little Roxie, **4/22 @ 9:15pm**. The eco-themed animated shorts were curated by Russia's ECOCUP Green Film Festival. Environmental topics are rarely the subject of Russian documentary films, but there is a long history of creating great eco-animation according to Anastasia Laukkanen, Founder & Director of ECOCUP. She will present these new films to SF audiences for the first time.

The program includes *Ancient Movie* by Pavel Pogudin, Russia, 2014; *Cinema Dehor* by Olga and Tatiana Polietkova, Russia, 2015; *Octopus* by Sergey Vavilov, Russia, 2015; *Pik Pik Pik* by Dmitriy Vysotskiy, Russia, 2014; *The Story of One Oak* by Tatyana Moshkova, Russia, 2014 and other films. (Total running time about 60 minutes.)

#### **Other animated films at the festival**

*Best of Luck with the Wall* by Josh Begley, USA, a voyage across the US-Mexico border, stitched together from 200,000 satellite images. This short is a collaboration from *Field of Vision* and *The Intercept*. *Lost in Light* by Sriram Murali, USA, with stunning time-lapse photography. The short shows how light pollution affects the view of California's night skies. *Lucens* by Marcel Barelli, Switzerland, the story of the first 100%, made-in-Switzerland nuclear power plant...and also the last. *No Go Zone* by Atelier Collectif, Belgium, a stop-motion animation chronicling the daily life of the last man to remain in the red

zone after the evacuation of the Fukushima area due the nuclear power plant accident of 2011. A sad, forced solitude lightened by the company of an occasional animal and the content of a bottle saved for a special moment. *There's Always a Way* by Darryl Jones, USA, 2016, a stop-motion animated short from Walk SF that talks about keeping streets safe for seniors. Winner of GFF's 2017 Climate Action Film Contest.



**THURSDAY, APRIL 20 THE BEST OF PUNTO Y RAYA, 2016, A CELEBRATION OF ABSTRACT ANIMATION! At the Exploratorium.** To get an idea of the content, excerpts of the program are online at <https://vimeo.com/199384159> Discount for ASIFA-SF members who show the box office this mention of the screening – a scanned copy will do.. <http://www.puntoyrayafestival.com/en/screenings/16/lmd/83>

**THE TIBURON FILM FESTIVAL WILL SHOW A HANDSOME FILM FROM LITTLE FLUFFY CLOUDS, MONDAY, APRIL 17, 8 PM** The 16<sup>th</sup> Tiburon International Film Festival will once again present a collection of films made by local Marin County filmmakers. The program includes *The River Flows* by Jerry van de Beek & Betsy De Fries who hail from Mill Valley. It is about river otters, playful, fun-to-watch animals. The film captures that spirit in a lush, colorful setting. Peter Coyote is the narrator. It was made for the River Otter Ecology Project with the hope that through greater exposure they may continue to educate and work with government and corporations to provide a conduit between these appealing little creatures and an ever-

increasing human presence. It will be shown Monday, April 17, 2017, 8 PM, at the Playhouse Theater [40 Main Street, Tiburon]. See it online at <http://www.riverotterecology.org> and stills from the short are at [littlefluffyclouds.com](http://littlefluffyclouds.com)



**'IN THIS CORNER OF THE WORLD' GETS NORTH AMERICAN DISTRIBUTION** The hand-drawn film follows a young woman whose town is bombed during WWII. Based on the award-winning manga by Fumiyo Kouno and written and directed by Sunao Katabuchi (*Mai Mai Miracle*, *Princess Arete*), the hand-drawn film follows a young lady named Suzu Urano, whose life is thrown into chaos when her small town of Kure in Hiroshima is bombed during World War II. It was produced by Masao Maruyama of Mappa Co. and Taro Maki of Genco. Shout! Factory has secured all distribution rights to the film, for cross-platform releases in U.S. and Canada. The planned rollout begins with a North American theatrical launch this summer. Shout! distributed animated indie *Long Way North*, which was nominated for an Annie Award for best independent animated feature.

**ED HOOKS SHARES HIS THOUGHTS ABOUT THE DECLINE OF THE HOLLYWOOD FILM INDUSTRY** In his monthly newsletter *Acting for Animators* he talks about his recent move to Europe and shares his thoughts about the state of the industry. He writes, “The entire movie industry is evolving. *Vanity Fair Magazine*, in its current International issue, features an enlightening article by Nick Bilton (*That's All Folks!*) in which he suggests that the Hollywood movie industry is, in fact, dying. The major studios depend upon producing mega-hits, and the formula is not working any more. The largest movie audiences for American-made movies now are in China,



which dictates that the studios produce more action, super-hero films that are loaded with VFX, movies that do not require a command of the English language and do not depend metaphorically on understanding the American culture. Mainly, Hollywood is turning comic books and novels into live-action movies that appeal to the lowest-common-denominator audiences. In the world of feature animation, Mr. Bilton, suggests, Disney Company will probably be the last to go because it owns Marvel, Lucas and Pixar. DreamWorks is gone and, really, Disney and Comcast-Universal own 90% of what remains of the U.S. feature animation industry. This, plus the emergence of new platforms for watching movies -- streaming, home-TV, computers - and the success of companies such as Netflix, Amazon.com and HBO, points to strong growth for lower-budget independently-produced feature animation. Instead of the typical US\$200 million movie budget, movies are being made for US\$10 million -- and even less. Ale Abru's wonderful Brazilian film ***Boy and the World*** had a budget of only US \$500,000!

There are 39 animated feature films currently in production in Europe, according to [Animation Europe](#) website, and another 33 in pre-production. There are more top notch animation festivals and video game summits in Europe than I can even count, and several of the world's finest animation schools are located in Europe. I am teaching *Acting for Animators* at Denmark's extraordinarily fine Animation Workshop next month, as well as the Dingle Animation Festival in Ireland. In May, I will participate in FMX in Stuttgart, Germany and be in residence for a week at The Animation Institute at Filmakademie Baden-Wurtemberg. These are top-drawer organizations and events, and I am privileged to be invited to be part of their programs. I believe that Europe's animators are on track to develop animation as the art form it is -- instead of using it as a sales tool, which is what Hollywood does. There is a creative tsunami coming to this part of the world, and I want to be a part of it. In addition to my *Acting for Animators* masterclasses, I am starting now to work as a script consultant, a function that I love because good storytelling is at the heart of everything.”

KC's comments. I suspect that even though the theatrical box office totals in the US will continue to decline, Hollywood will stay in

business based on foreign box office ticket sales. Over the years I've watched the percentage of what a film makes overseas grow from way under 50% of its income to considerably more, 60 or 70% in some cases. Hollywood has been catering to the foreign markets for many years. A recent example is Disney's new *Beauty and the Beast*. They didn't plan it to be a musical at first, but executives decided to make it one as box office records show musicals do better in foreign markets.

**ED HOOKS' "CRAFT NOTES FOR ANIMATORS: A PERSPECTIVE ON A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CAREER"** Hooks, who has taught classes about acting for animators since 1996 for several decades and is the author of books on that subject, has what looks like an exciting new book out that discusses the nature of the maturing animated feature. It starts with Snow White and Walt's concepts of performance and ends with animation for adults including *Chico and Rita* and *Waltz with Bashir*. It also goes into the trends in products geared for families including *Frozen*, *Inside Out* and *The Lego Movie* along with acting and storytelling in video games and virtual reality. I look forward to reading Ed's book after I file my taxes. KC



**SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE'OPENS IN APRIL** The *Hollywood Reporter* sums up *Smurfs: The Lost Village* from Sony in four words, "Geared only for young viewers." *Yahoo News* says, "Anyone who would go to *this* movie without children is seriously starved for entertainment."



**WHEN WILL LAIKA CREATE ANOTHER ANIMATED FEATURE?** Travis Knight who runs the company and directed *Kubo and the Two Strings* is now going to direct a live-action *Transformers* spinoff called *Bumblebee* for Paramount. The film franchise is based on the popular line of toys from Hasbro. The film franchise was launched in 2007 with director Michael Bay's *Transformers*, followed by *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* in 2009, *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* in 2011. The most recent installment, 2014's *Transformers: Age of Extinction*, earned more than \$1 billion at the global box office. *Bumblebee* will be produced by Lorenzo Di Bonaventura, Michael Bay and Steven Spielberg from a script written by Christina Hodson. It is slated for release on June 8, 2018.

While this is great news for Travis, what will his absence from his animation studio mean for the outstanding crew he has assembled there?

**IN 2003 THE DISNEY STUDIO FINISHED A FILM SALVADORE DALI WORKED ON BRIEFLY.** In order to own the rights to the hundreds of preliminary drawings Dali created for Disney in 1945, the film had to be completed so before Roy Disney died he pushed for the completion of the film. The finished film *Destino* (2003) is a curious looking short. It really isn't a Dali film as most of it wasn't designed or drawn by him. What the studio got out of the project was full ownership of the artwork, now worth a large sum of money. If you are curious to see the film it is online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GFkN4deuZU>

**DISNEY'S BEAST IN THE NEW "BEAUTY AND THE BEAST" IS A "FULLY DIGITIZED"/MOTION CAPTURE CREATURE IN A LIVE ACTION FILM** According to a *NY Times* article, Dan Stevens from *Downton Abbey* had phosphorescent makeup that turns blue under ultraviolet light applied to him and then proprietary software converted the image into the furry horned beast. The feature is reported to have cost over 300 million dollars (a \$160 million production budget and the rest was spent on marketing), The opening weekend gross was an estimated \$350 million worldwide (\$180 million in the US). As of March 26 (10<sup>th</sup> day) it had grossed about \$700 million worldwide!



**BOB IGER FOR PRESIDENT? THE "HOLLYWOOD REPORTER" SAYS HIS HOLLYWOOD FRIENDS ARE ENCOURAGING HIM TO RUN IN 2020** By then Disney's CEO may have finally retired and be looking for something to do. He probably would be a middle of the road candidate, probably not the innovated one needed to undo all the damage Trump might do by then. Unlike Donald who just paid out \$25 million to people he defrauded with his Trump University scam, Iger has run his corporation without major scandals, just minor ones like wage fixing. Disney is now the world's most successful media company while Trump has gone bankrupt and sold off his Plaza hotel at a loss, etc. Iger seems to be well liked and he seems to have impeccable credentials. He recently told stock holders he is willing to stay on when his contract runs out and he probably will stay on until he finds and grooms an exceptional replacement. Iger has plenty of friends in high places within the Democratic Party including former Vice President Al Gore. Also Trump has paved the way for a businessman who has never held

public office to become president. (**Update:** his contract was just extended to July 2, 2019.)

It is too soon to guess what will happen but other names being talked about are Massachusetts' Sen. Elizabeth Warren and Washington's Gov. Jay Inslee. Bernie would be an exciting candidate and he is making waves, but he may be too independent of the big wigs that nominated Hillary and may still be in control of the party.

### **DISNEY'S CEO BOB IGER IS PART OF TRUMP'S STRATEGIC AND POLICY FORUM**

He has announced to the company's shareholders, "I don't believe my membership in that group in any way endorses or supports any specific policy of the president or his administration. I made a decision that I thought was in the best interests of our company and of our industry, to have an opportunity to express points of view directly to the President of the United States and to his administration... I think it's a privileged opportunity to have a voice in the room." His comments came in response to calls from two activist investors for Iger to stand down from Trump's business task force. Iger cited the *Hamilton* stage play number "The Room Where It Happens" to argue for his continued participation: "I think there's an opportunity, when you're in the room where it happens, to express opinions that I think are in the best interests of this company and its shareholders." Since there is a chance he will run for president in 2020 he should benefit from having this experience in Washington.

### **DISNEY IS BEING SUED FOR STEALING IDEAS FOR**

**"ZOOTOPIA"** According to the papers filed writer Gary Goldman pitched his "similar" project to Disney. Goldman has screen credit for writing *Total Recall* and *Next* and producing *Minority Report*.

### **DISNEY PAYS \$3.8 MILLION FOR VIOLATING MINIMUM WAGE RULES IN FLORIDA, A RIGHT TO WORK STATE**

Disney was deducting uniform or "costume" expenses that caused some workers' hourly wages to fall below the federal minimum wage so workers brought charges against the company with the U.S Department of Labor. The Walt Disney Co. has agreed to pay \$3.8 million in back wages to Florida workers for

violating minimum wage and overtime rules as part of the settlement. The federal agency says that the back wages will be paid to more than 16,000 workers at the Disney Vacation Club Management Corp. and Walt Disney Parks and Resorts in Florida. Disney has deducted uniform expenses that caused some workers' hourly wages to fall below the federal minimum wage. Time and payroll records were also not properly maintained by the resort. Disney also didn't pay workers for duties performed before their shifts started and after their shifts ended. The agency says Disney cooperated with their investigation. "These violations are not uncommon and are found in other industries, as well," said Daniel White, district director for the Wage and Hour Division in Jacksonville. "Employers cannot make deductions that take workers below the minimum wage and must accurately track and pay for all the hours their employees work, including any time they work before or after their scheduled shifts. We hope the resolution of this case alerts other employers who may be paying employees in a similar manner, so that they too can correct their practices and operate in compliance with the law."

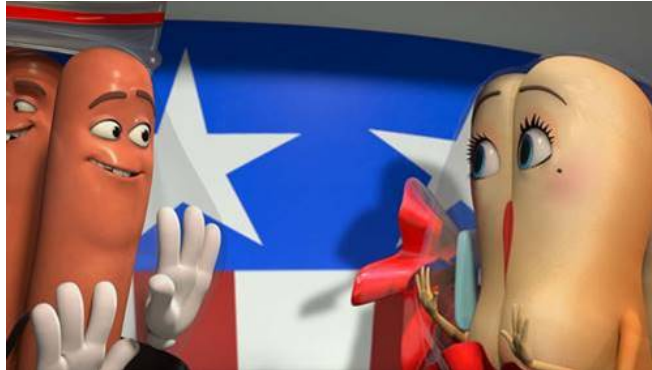
Florida has a long history of labor problems. When the Fleischer Studio moved to Florida after they lost the strike over wages and other labor issues, they needed their best artists so they invited them to move south and agreed to pay them union wages. But when they hired non-union workers for less essential jobs the wage scale was less than what a union worker would be paid for the same position. When I interviewed two union directors who moved to Florida then I was told there was a lot of friction/resentment caused by non-union workers being paid less.

That was in the late 1930s, but things haven't improved much in Florida. When I visited the Studio in Florida in 1988, I was told several ugly labor stories. A groundskeeper (I think he was a union man) told me they had a new contract and to get it they had to settle for slightly less pay and a slight reduction in benefits. If they didn't accept the terms they could be replaced with non-union workers. A few years later a relative of my wife worked there and also said conditions were not great for workers because Disney was taking advantage of Florida being a right to work state. Now Trump wants to make a federal right

to work law that covers all states. He also would like to remove minimum wage laws.

**DISNEY PROUDLY ANNOUNCE THAT THE ARE PRODUCING “RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET: WRECK-IT RALPH 2”**

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**“SAUSAGE PARTY 2” WILL BE MADE BY CINESITE IN VANCOUVER** They recently acquired Nitrogen Studios that made the original hit. Cinesite is a British digital visual effects firm that has just expanded into Canada by acquiring the Vancouver firm. Nitrogen got caught up last year in a pay dispute with local animators who were being underpaid (exploited). *Sausage Party*, created by Seth Rogen was hated by lots of critics, but the vulgar teen product was quite profitable.

**WATCH THE ANNIE AWARDS CEREMONY ON THE INTERNET** The ceremony includes lots of clips from the nominated films, some choice moments on stage and a chance to see some of the people who create the business and art form. Some moments like the award given to the people that made *Life, Animated* are quite touching. It also is a chance to see what TV animation is up to, both series you might want to see and others you might want to avoid like the plague. The ceremony runs almost three hours long, but you can fast forward. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAOmcIzoOus>



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## **AN OFFICIAL BART SIMPSONS BIKE IS NOW AVAILABLE**

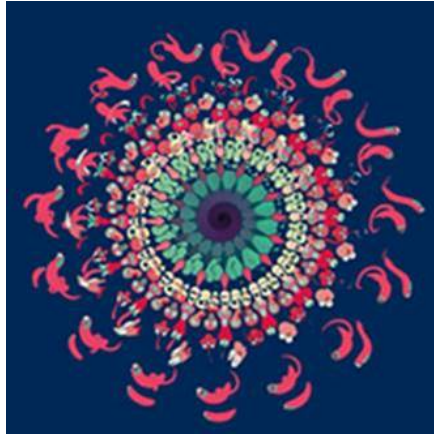
Made by State Bicycle Co., 3 models available, only \$499.

- **KLIK AMSTERDAM ANIMATION FESTIVAL'S CALL FOR ENTRIES** Submission deadline is June 1. They love fun films as well as serious works. <http://www.klik.amsterdam/>

**OTTAWA INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FESTIVAL, NO SUBMISSION FEE, ENTER BY MAY 26** The Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF), North America's leading animation film festival, is now accepting entries for competition in 2017! Entries are due **May 26**, and there is no entry fee. Festival dates are from September 20-24. OIAF invites animators from around the globe to submit their recent work in the following major categories: Animated Feature, Narrative Animated Short, Non-Narrative Animated Short, Student Animation, and several categories for Commissioned Animation (Short Preschool Animation Made for Children 0-5, Short Animation Made for Children 6-12, Preschool Animation Series Made for Children 0-5, and Animation Series Made for Children 6-12). There will also be craft and other awards including the Film Critic's Prize, which is new to 2017! For more information, including Festival rules, please visit the OIAF website at: [www.animationfestival.ca](http://www.animationfestival.ca)

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The chili pepper Mandela was this year's trailer

**ANIMA BRUSSELS SHINES BRIGHT  
FEBRUARY 24 TO MARCH 5, 2017  
By Nancy Denny-Phelps**

It may have been cold and rainy outside but inside the Flagey the films brought rays of sunshine to ANIMA Brussels. With 279 films to be screened in 98 programs, there was something to please everyone.

I am usually drawn to the shorts programs but this year there were several very strong features. *Window Horses: The Poetic Persian Epiphany of Rosie Ming* completely captivated me. Produced and distributed by the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), the story of Rosie Ming, a young Canadian poet whose mother was Chinese and her father Iranian was directed by Ann Marie Fleming. Rosie lives with her over protective Chinese grandparents and has never traveled alone until she is invited to perform at a poetry festival in Shiraz, Iran.



*Window Horses: The Poetic Persian Epiphany of Rosie Ming*. "Tapping a

host of fellow animators to create a visually rich tapestry, director-writer-animator Ann Marie Fleming creates an entertaining, educational, and poignant tale about identity and imagination that is filled with stories and poetry. Overall, the film provides a counterweight to our xenophobic times, proving that human beings are more alike than unlike and that poetry can be relevant across millennia.”  
**Variety**

Once in Iran, Rosie finds herself in the company of foreign poets and Iranians, all of whom tell her stories that force her to confront her beliefs about her past, the truth about her Iranian father whom she has always thought had abandoned her and her mother, and the nature of poetry itself. **Window Horses** combines several styles and techniques of animation. The narrative is presented in one consistent style while the poems and histories are created by different animators. Rosie herself is a stick girl. After watching the 85 minute film I walked out of the theatre thinking about the vast differences between cultures and the simple threads that bind us all together like poetry.

South Korean director Sang-ho Yeon’s feature films are always hard hitting looks at South Korean culture. His 2011 **King of Pigs** was about bullying in Korean boys’ schools. In 2013 **The Fake**, an even darker and more violent film, exposed corruption in organized religious cults in his country. His latest feature **Seoul Station** is a zombie thriller. As the government struggles to shut down the area around a zombie outbreak a father is desperately looking for his runaway daughter. Amidst all of the blood as the zombies take over the city the surprise twist to the story is definitely unexpected. **Seoul Station** is a prequel to Sang-ho Yeon’s 2016 live action film **Train to Busan**.

The opening night feature film was **Louise in Winter** from director Jean-Francoise Laguionie. Jean-Francois, a guest at the festival, told me that his beautifully hand drawn film is about liberty. When Louise misses the last train out of the little sea-side resort where she summers, she opens herself up to things that she is not used to, recalling her past, her childhood memories, and first loves. He also told me that when he was 9 years old he was left by his mother with his grandmother in Normandy for a year where he, like Louise, was free to run in the woods. He also said that he actually did see a body hanging in a tree that was the result of an exploded land mine left over from the war much as Louise does in the film. **Louise in Winter** is created in the

same painterly style as his previous films but in pastel colors rather than in the bright vivid shades of his previous films such as his 2011 *The Painting*.

Laguionie said that he has 2 films in pre-production. One, *Monkey Castle* is furthest along. His other film, with the working title *Slokem*, is based on his father whose idol was Joshua Slokem, the first man to sail single-handed around the world in 1895 to 1898. His father's dream was to complete and sail a boat he was building in the family garden. He never did finish building the boat but he did instill a lifelong love of the sea in his son.

A retrospective of M. Laguionie's films included 4 feature films and a program of 7 short films. From the *Lady and the Cellist*, which won the Annecy Grand Prix in 1964, to *Rowing Across the Atlantic*, the 1978 Palm d'Or winner at Cannes in 1978, the sea is a recurring theme in his films. His retrospective concluded with a documentary portrait of Jean-Francois' life and works.

The Anima short film competitions were also very strong. Along with films that have already won numerous awards such as Theodore Ushev's *Blind Vaysha* and Frank Dion's *The Head Vanishes* there were some lovely new surprises. Italian director Ludovica Ottavian's hand drawn *Arzena Velenifera* mixes black humor, tango, and murder, a great combination. The film takes place in a ballroom where a woman is overwhelmed by uncontrollable jealousy and furious madness. In her rage she kills all of her annoying or unfaithful lovers to the driving beat of the tango. Ludovica was inspired to make the film by the curious true story of the serial killer Vera Renczi who reportedly poisoned 35 people, including 2 husbands, multiple lovers, and her own son in the 1920's.



The International Jury awarded the Grand Prix to Anna Budanova for the hauntingly beautiful *Among the Black Waves*. According to an old Norse legend, the souls of the drowned are transformed into seals. In Anna's film a hunter steals the skin of one of the mythical creatures, a girl/seal, which prevents her from returning to the sea. Instead, the girl becomes the hunter's wife, they live a good life together and have a daughter but the wife/seal keeps yearning to return to the sea. The strong 11' 10" story is intensified by the use of black, white, and grey tones with occasional splashes of red.

### *Futuranima*

*Futuranima* has become a major part of the festival. It offered a wide range of conferences, professional meetings, and an opportunity to hear a wide range of filmmakers, writers, and producers talk about their work. Sessions were designed not just for professionals but also for students.

The Master Class in Visual Storytelling presented by writer/director Jericca Cleland focused on how images have the power to build story content. She also presented techniques for structuring visuals to support cinematic narrative. Jericca knows what she is talking about. She honed her skills at Pixar working with John Lasseter. Her work includes the design and staging of *Finding Nemo*, *Toy Story 2*, and *Arthur Christmas* for Sony/Aardman. She is currently writing and directing an animated feature with Nørlum Studio which co-produced *The Song of the Sea* and *Long Way North*.

The *Pitch Sessions* spotlighted Belgian animation productions with an entire morning devoted to writers and illustrators presenting their projects to help find project partners. In the afternoon Walloon and Flemish animation studios discussed their past, present, and future work.

Estonian master storyteller Kasper Jancis took his audience through the script writing process of his latest short film *Piano*. Kasper is very adept at presenting several parallel storylines in a film and then tying them all together in the end. He is now working on his first animated feature, *Morton on the Ship of Fools*. Based on a children's book that Kasper wrote, with music that he composed, Kasper said that it is very different from his previous short films. The film is for children and has dialogue where as his previous short adult animations have relied on

sound design and music.

The *Italian Stop Motion Wizards* session presented by Donato Di Carlo and Virgilio Villoresi was one of the most interesting *Futuranima* sessions for me. Donato Di Carlo is one of 4 founding members of a creative studio founded in Milan in 2007. The studio is noted for combining artisanal and digital skills to create “handmade” videos and commercials. Di Carlo told me that “the main technique used is stop-motion, but we like to find different technical solutions that allow us to create something new every time and to evolve our designs and research. We usually shoot objects, sets, and puppets built by hand”.

The studio designs projects in 360 degrees, and Donato presented a show reel of their intricate constructions including an entire city built out of paper that was so detailed that you would swear that it was a real city. You can view their show reel and find out more about how they create their amazing commercials and videos at: [www.dadomani.com](http://www.dadomani.com) Wit coupled with superb technique and attention to detail characterizes independent Milan filmmaker Virgilio Villoresi’s work. My particular favorite of his films and music video’s is *Fine*, the story of the birth, life, and death of a soldier. What makes the two minute film unique is that the soldier is created on Villoresi’s hand and was inspired by the concept of hand painting and finger movement. Although it is a simple idea, the detailed painting on his hand, the gestures, and editing combine to create a very clever film. The introduction and end soundtracks, as well as the military salute in the final scene are an homage to Jiri Trinka’s masterpiece *The Hand*.

When the topic comes to Japanese animation, people generally think of Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli but Mirai Mizue proved at his *Futuranima* presentation that there is a new generation of abstract animation in Japan. Mizue has a strong obsession toward cels which at first glance almost looks like slides under a microscope until you look close up and then you realize that he has drawn every frame with amazing density. Mirai draws and paints each individual cel on paper then uses digital compositing to create the amazing effects in his films. He told the audience that he has recently been trying to move into what is for him the new territory of minimalistic abstract animation using linear figures. He gave the audience a look at his current work in progress *Dreamland*, which is based on his memories of an abandoned Japanese

fun park located in a town that was completely destroyed by an earthquake. Mizue said that when the park was built no one could ever imagine that it would end up abandoned. He then showed us a brief excerpt from *Dreamland*, his homage to this piece of Japanese history from his boyhood.

### **Portuguese animation**

This year the festival spotlighted Portuguese animation. One program paid homage to such great names of Portuguese animation as Abi Feijo, Regina Pessoa, Jose Miguel Ribeiro, and Zepe. The second program was primarily devoted to the talented new generation of animators such as David Doutel and Vasco Se who created the haunting *Fuligem (Soot)* and *Amelia and Duarte* by Alice Guimaraes and Monica Santos. I had a chance to sit down at the festival with my old friend Portuguese animator Jose Pedro Cavalheiro, better known as Zepe. His hand drawn black and white films, *Candido* (2007) and *Stuart* (2006) have their roots in Portugal's rich literary tradition and are considered classics of Portuguese animation. Zepe told me that he is working on 3 new projects. *The Cycle* is a short film about biodiversity. A biologist, an engineer, and a horticulturist work in a research station devoted to the protection of biodiversity. One night the course of the stars shift and the moonlight turns red, announcing an ominous reaction to the trio's well-meaning intervention. Will the 3 be able to bring back biodiversity and restore the lost harmony? Unlike Zepe's previous films, *The Cycle* will be done in 3D but the clip that he showed me looked like 2D.

*Mr. Passenger*, an animated series designed for 6 to 12 year olds will consist of 26 five minute episodes. Zepe's third project is an animated feature film, *Dom Fradique*. It is an adventure story set in parallel worlds: the city and the forest. The character design is in Zepe's unique style but all three projects are in vivid colors. After seeing short previews of the 3 projects I look forward to seeing the finished films.

### **Programs for kids**

Anima Brussels is held each year during the week long Carnival school holiday so the mornings and early afternoons are devoted to screenings for youngsters of all ages. There is something magical about sitting in a theatre of 3 year olds with their parents staring in silent delight as



they watched *Molly Monster* and laughing at all of the right places. The Swiss, German, Swedish co-production, designed for preschooler's, deals with the theme of becoming a sister or brother and the excitement that comes with it from the point of view of a small child. Molly is a deeply loved only-monster child of Popo and Etna Monster. When mother gives birth to an egg, which Popo must hatch, Molly sets out to find her new place in the family. Although the film is designed for small children there is plenty of humor, and visual delights for the entire family. The catchy music by Annette Focks adds a rich feel to the film.

The Dutch/Belgian co-production *Rintje* delighted a slightly older audience of 5 to 8 year olds. Originally created as a television series, the short episodes based on Dutch author and illustrator Sieb Posthunra's book about his dog Rintje, have been put together to create a 45 minute film.

Rintje is a puppy who discovers the world in the same way a child does. He loves to go on adventures and can behave badly at times. In the film he goes to school for the first time, celebrates his birthday, has a loose tooth, stays overnight at Granny's, and gets his first injection – all events that youngsters can identify with. Even though the film was designed for children I thoroughly enjoyed watching the lovely dog puppets as Rintje, his friends, and family go about daily life.

A workshop designed to give youngsters from 5 to 12 years old the opportunity to try filmmaking first hand focused on shapes and colors. The animators from Zorobabel Atelier in Brussels set up three different areas, each starting with colored shapes, where young film makers could create and animate characters under the guidance of a professional animator. The sessions were free. You can see a sample of the films that were created at: [Vimeo.com/zorobabel/chroma](https://vimeo.com/zorobabel/chroma)

For the very youngest film goers there was face painting which turned even the youngest babies into tigers, butterflies and every other animal imaginable.

### **Other events**

Each year *Animated Night* draws a large crowd that fills the main theatre and balconies up to the ceiling. Beginning at 21u30 (9:30 at night) 3 programs of films that were submitted to the festival but not selected for the competitions were screened. Between each screening there were 45 minute breaks to visit the bar and dance to music provided by animator Mirai Mizue turned DJ. The 15 Euro ticket price for 6 hours of film and music is one of the best deals in town. The audience was encouraged to come in their pajamas to participate in the pajama contest. The winner received a *Best of Anima* DVD and an original Mirai drawing. The audience also voted for their favorite. This year's winner was ***Our Wonderful Nature – The Common Chameleon*** by Tomer Eshed from Germany. <https://vimeo.com/167910027> The extremely funny film tells us that the chameleon has no natural enemies and then took us on a very funny adventure as the chameleon goes hunting. I don't want to spoil the end because I'm sure that the film will be shown at many other festivals.

***Tabook*** directed by Dutch animator Dario van Vree, produced by Tunde Vollenbroek with music by Nik Phelps led off Animated Night. The film about a young girl browsing in a book store who is unexpectedly drawn to a volume of kinky erotica led off Animated Night and set the tone for the long night of film which didn't end until 3:30 in the morning. <https://vimeo.com/170406453>

Vivacious actress Stephanie Coerten who introduced the screenings and interviewed film makers on stage all 10 days of the festival skipped her usual haute couture and donned psychedelic print pants and fuzzy slippers to keep the audience awake throughout the long night.

Virtual Reality came to Anima this year. Along with a panel discussion by VR professionals on creating and producing animated VR films, there was the opportunity to immerse yourself in a 360 degree VR experience courtesy of Poolpio Productions. Filmmaker Filip Sterckx and artist and gallery owner Anroon Verbeek created a clever visual installation using motion capture and video mapping. A fun VR experience was inviting Anima visitors to sit at a real dinner table set



for a party with plates, silverwear, and a wine glass. A miniature chef appeared at each plate and prepared a virtual meal on your plate complete with entrée, vegetables, and ending with a dessert complete with a miniature Roman candle.

9e Concept brought together a group of artists to create stickers in the shape of a droplet called *Francs Collers* that could be stuck together to create a patchwork of different pictures. Using the free app for an iPhone or Android you could look at the different pictures in augmented reality and sound.



Following the closing night awards ceremony *Ethel and Ernest*, directed by Roger Mainwood, was screened. Based on Raymond Briggs' graphic novel, the hand drawn film is a heartwarming tribute to the long, happy marriage of his parents Ethel and Ernest Briggs. From their courtship in the late 1920's to their deaths a few months apart in 1971 the couple lived in a London suburb and raised their son Raymond. The film richly illustrates London working class life during some of the most momentous events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Great Depression, World War II, the advent of television, and Neil Armstrong landing on the moon are seen through the eyes and discussed by this typical couple. Briggs is well known for *When the Wind Blows* and *Snowman*, both of which have been turned into animated films that have become classics.

. I am already looking forward to the 2018 edition of Anima Brussels which will take place from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of February. You can check out more of ANIMA Brussels at [www.animafestival.be](http://www.animafestival.be)

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# GLAS 2017

by Steve Segal

The barrage of contemporary animation known as GLAS, came to Berkeley and as usual provided a collection of cutting-edge, avant-garde, memorable animated work and an engaging procession of speakers. For me the primary attractions were Pixar director Brad Bird, who aside from being an A-list director, is an engaging and uninhibited speaker and Swiss master Georges Schwizgebel, whose several decades of painterly works are all mesmerizing. He showed about five of his personal favorites.

Bird described how he went from working on the *Simpsons* to making *Iron Giant* just as Warner Animation was closing. He described it as being on the Titanic and going from steerage to elegant first class on a sinking ship. He also told how he managed to move from animation to live action when Tom Cruise recruited him to direct *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol* because he was a fan of Bird's work. He went on to praise Cruise's commitment to his character as in a scene when he is being chased by much younger, athletic stuntmen. Cruise kept outrunning them even though he was supposed to get captured. He needed to commit to running without restraint. Bird was also gracious at his reception, taking time to chat with his fans and pose for pictures.

A pleasant surprise was the Belgian director Mathieu Labaye, whose work is highly detailed and comes from a place of deep introspection. One of his films dealt with the handicapped and we learned from the discussion that his father was confined to wheelchair. Another of his excellent films was a live action documentary focusing on several artists who had some mental deficiencies but their art is quite brilliant. Their art is turned into animated pieces by Labaye.



Japanese artist Masaaki Yuasa's work is dreamlike surreal and highly kinetic makers were there it would animations. All these artists as well as several others acted as special presenters and judges.

The single nod to classical cartoons was Jerry Beck's presentation of pre-code cartoons. This showed unexpurgated frolics of early cartoon characters before the Hays code removed smut from the cinema. Betty Boop, Van Beuren's Tom & Jerry (two guys predating the cat and mouse by about a decade), Flip the Frog, the personal creation by Disney's one time partner Ube Iwerks, and some Looney Tunes. These pristine prints of rare and racy cartoons presented via Bluray were amazing to see.

There was several ongoing events. At the East Bay Media Center there was an installation called Ghosting TV. It was a demonstration of virtual and augmented reality where the viewers wore goggles and experienced immersive animated worlds. And at The Berkeley Art Center was an installation by computer artist Peter Burr titled Pattern Language which unfortunately I didn't find time to see.

And then there were the parties, one of the best reasons to get a festival pass. This is a chance to meet the special guests in an uncrowded social setting. Many well-known animation artists were seen at the festival: well-known British indie cel animator, Screen Novelties founders Mark Caballero and Seamus Walsh, performance artist/ animator Miwa Matreyek, Disney recruiter Brooke Keesling, indie animators Gary Schwartz, Paul Vester, Michael Langan, and Maureen Selwood.

Since so many thing were going on at once I only saw about half of the competition screenings. As was the case last year the competition films were a little hard to decipher as the GLAS festival definitely skews towards the avant-garde, rough-edged and unusual.

Here are the winning films with description supplied by the jury:

## GRAND PRIX



***Impossible Figures and Other Stories II*** by Marta Pajek, Poland. “For its economic, often bleached-like drawings that capture the fragile battle between consciousness and obliviousness, along with its mesmerizing, painful, but ultimately buoyant story of self-awareness and self-control, we award the Grand Prize to ***Impossible Figures and Other Stories II*** by Marta Pajek.”

## AUDIENCE AWARD

***Hotaru*** by William Laboury, France

## BEST NARRATIVE SHORT

***Nighthawk*** by Spela Cadez, Slovenia “A blistering, squirming tragedy trailing an alcoholic whizzing blurrily through bending roads in the black of night, the award for Best Narrative animation goes to ***Nighthawk***.”

## BEST NON-NARRATIVE SHORT

***Datum Point*** by Ryo Orikasa, Japan. “In capturing the serenity of the sea, the soothing rush of the waves while reminding us of our own temporary, always flowing existence, the award for Best non-narrative goes to the Zen-inspired clay animation mastery of ***Datum Point***.”

**Special Mention: *The Estate*** by Ronny Trocker – Belgium. “Conceptually smart, technically innovative, with a subtle approach to complex issues, we give a special mention to ***The Estate***.”

**Special Mention: *Orogenesis*** by Boris Labbe – France “For its hypnotic rhythm, precision and effects, we give a special mention to ***Orogenesis***.”

### **BEST GRADUATE SHORT**

*Garden Party* “from France, for its striking mise-en-scene, unique multi-layered story, and its odd, funny and horrifying ambiance, the award for Best Graduation film goes to *Garden Party*.”

### **BEST UNDERGRADUATE SHORT**

*Big Surf* by Brian Smee, USA, from CalArts “Fusing documentary, history, experimental film, this raw and richly re-imagined ghost story captures the blurred pains and fragments of a tragedy caused by bone-headed and greedy humans. The award for Best Undergraduate animation goes to *Big Surf*.”

### **BEST COMMISSIONED SHORT**

*Flight Attendant* by Mattis Dover, “for its beautiful and intense visuals, the award for Best Commissioned film goes to *Flight Attendant*.”

### **BEST U.S. SHORT**

*Jill* by Lilli Carre. “*Jill* is like an empty container that viewers have to fill. This film is like an invitation and gives the viewers the opportunity to individually do whatever they want with it, according to who they are and how they feel. Using a minimalist, weird form, it just says enough to put you in a very strange state in which you’re entertained and embarrassed at the same time, in which you don’t exactly know if you want to laugh or not. Which makes Jill a very unique charming lady.

**Special Mention: *Glucose* by Jeron Braxton** “Groundbreaking ways to tell stories in this film. We could see the artist was influenced by Japanese comics, early 8-bit games, and multimedia art. This film beautifully explores the complicated identities of young POC Americans in the age of the internet.”

### **BEST FAMILY SHORT**

*In a Cage* by Loic Bruyere, France “*In a Cage*, the seemingly simple and charming story about an unlikely friendship between a caged bear and an abandoned hatchling is our choice for the best film within the Children’s competition. We loved this film for its clarity of storytelling, beautiful visuals, the music and the meaningful message that is

more than meets the eye.

**Special Mention: *Otto*** “We’d also like to give a very honorable mention to *Otto*. This film is beautifully executed and deals with difficult themes like loss and acceptance, and the power of the human spirit to heal. The organic inclusion of such a diverse cast needs to be applauded.”

# GLAS 2017

## Notes – Marty McNamara

When the inaugural GLAS animation festival was announced for last year, many in the Bay Area animation community were excited by the prospect, particularly when we learned that the event’s organizers had ties to Irene Kotlarz and the team that produced the excellent Platform festival in Portland in 2007.

We were all painfully aware that there was no true international animation festival in the entire United States and only one (Ottawa) in North America. The only quality American event that comes close is the Northwest International Animation Festival in Portland/Eugene, which is non-competitive and includes no programs with visiting international animators to vary the schedule. Instead it focuses on a marathon three-day screening of 150 films, some of which most animators would candidly consider to not be “festival caliber.” It’s a good event, but rather grueling.

Locally the San Francisco International Animation Festival (SFIAF) was held from 2006 until 2011. This offshoot of the San Francisco International Film Festival (SFIFF) was another non-competitive “showcase” with no special programs featuring guest animators. Although many superb films were screened, there were also a fair number that had interesting design, but weak film concepts. Eventually some viewers began staying away from the thematically chosen programs and simply attended the festival’s annual Best of Annecy package. When SFIFF leadership changed, the annual animation weekend became a casualty, but its programming had never been able to truly capture the breadth of the great animation being produced

worldwide.

The 2016 GLAS festival was a very promising debut, featuring visits from innovative young European directors like Jeremy Clapin and Hisko Hulsing, as well as Bay Area luminaries. The schedule was varied and well-paced. However, the quality of the competition programs was quite uneven, and observers speculated that there may not have been sufficient time to make international filmmakers aware of the new festival's existence and attract their submissions. Last year many more American student films were selected for inclusion than would be expected in an international animation festival. This is one of the reasons why the quality of the competition programs did not measure up to more established foreign festivals.

In 2016 I bought a full pass and saw almost the entire festival. This year I was only able to attend on the first and last of the festival's four days, but saw four of the five competition programs, both International Showcases, Jerry Beck's archival screening, and the special presentations by Mattieu Labaye and Masaaki Yuasa, both of whose shorts I had seen in Europe. Labaye's program was the most interesting of the 2017 festival for me.

The quality of the competition screenings improved over last year, but has not yet reached the level of the better European festivals or the 2007 Platform event. GLAS' commissioned film and student film categories (particularly undergraduate) have been significantly weaker than the norm at the best festivals. Audiences in the Shattuck Cinema's small theatres have been moderate in size both years, and some screenings were more than half empty, although to be fair, I may not have attended the most popular programs or seen them on the busiest days.

Organizing and running a competitive international animation festival is a monumental task, and the Bay Area animation community fervently hopes that GLAS will thrive and grow into an outstanding annual event. In that spirit, here are a few suggestions for **possible improvement**:

**1) Expand the coverage of the Call for Submissions.** Having attended festivals in other countries, I know there are better films out there. Student films from England, France, Germany, Korea, Japan and

other countries are generally significantly better than their American counterparts in both conceptual development and technical execution. American students need to see and be inspired by foreign students' films.

Similarly, independent films are almost always stronger in countries that provide government support for personal creative work. It is no coincidence that virtually all the GLAS awards from both 2016 and 2017 were bestowed on foreign films, with the obvious exception of the winners of the US Competition. Hopefully GLAS will be able to reach more of these filmmakers and improve the competition programs, which already contain many fine films.

Finally, commissioned films can portray important and powerful messages. That category should go far beyond music videos.

**2) Make the student competition and the commissioned film competition separate programs.** Working professionals or full-time students may wish to attend, but be unable to take part in the whole festival. In that case they may wish to concentrate on the commissioned films, the student films, or another category. Many of us want to see everything, but cannot. Help us see some of it.

**3) Do not restrict historical programs to rare Hollywood commercial cartoons,** particularly if the festival wishes to highlight innovative independent animation. There are many interesting historical programs that could parallel and illuminate the contemporary films GLAS features.

**4) Include a complete run list of the films in each program on the GLAS website** and preferably, in the festival catalog as well. Some special program lists were completely missing from both. If print deadlines are too early for some late-arriving film lists, that can't be helped, but complete lists should always be available on the website. We want to know whether there is a film we are especially interested in or, conversely, whether we have already seen most films in a program, before traveling to the East Bay. The website lists all the films in competition, but not which program they are in. The catalog has that info, but cannot be obtained until we arrive at the festival, so it is difficult to plan ahead.



**5) Promote GLAS in the Bay Area.** A website is not enough. I teach at two of the region's largest college animation programs and have yet to see a single GLAS promotional email or call for submissions sent to faculty to disseminate. Students are eager to attend animation events and could boost the festival's bottom line. Staff animators at regional film and game studios will also be interested in taking part. I see some in the crowds at GLAS, but know that others are still unaware of the festival's existence.

We at ASIFA would be happy to consult with the festival and possibly coordinate our international programs. We don't want to see GLAS suffer the fate of earlier Bay Area festivals!

### **ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION**

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