

June 2023



PIXAR'S SOON TO BE RELEASED FEATURE WILL BE THE CLOSING NIGHT FILM AT CANNES Critics seem to be overly impressed with the complex software development that suggests the main stars of *Elemental* are made of fire and water. They don't suggest it tells a great story. Frankly I don't know what to expect as all the advanced hype about the film is about "the studio's most fully simulated characters, which required creating new tools for rigging and performance along with establishing a new VFX-driven workflow." I look forward to the first reviews on May 28 as it screens on the 27th in France. It opens in theatres June 16.



'SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE' OPENS JUNE 2-4 AND THE TRADES ARE SPECULATING ON HOW BIG THE BOX OFFICE WILL BE. Are gamblers betting on box offices instead of on horse races? Sony suggests their new tentpole will be a huge gross between a "\$70M-\$80M Box Office Opening." That is just the domestic take. They expect it to out-perform the worldwide gross of the 2018 Spiderman film, and that was \$384.2 million worldwide. I also learned there is another sequel, *Spider-Man: Beyond the Spider-Verse*, coming to a theatre near you in 2024.

The revised forecast for *The Little Mermaid's* estimated opening has increased from \$110 million to between \$115 million and \$120 million (the Disney live-action pic opens over Memorial Day).



Signe with the audience in Brussels

SIGNE BAUMANE LOVES WHAT THE SEATTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL WROTE ABOUT HER NEW FEATURE They wrote, "Their delightful and evocatively animated musical comedy for adults follows Zelma over 23 years as she learns about and rebels against what women are taught about sex, body image, the promise of one true love."

So far *My Love Affair With Marriage* has been accepted to over 80 film festivals around the world, received 21 awards, including a nomination by the **European Film Academy** for Best Animated Feature Film, Europe's version of the Oscars. So far the film has been released in Latvia, Spain, Italy, Central Europe and it is about to be released theatrically in France.

As for our seeing it, Signe says that securing a theatrical release in North America has been a challenge. Due to the growth of streamers and the pandemic, the habits of movie goers have been changing. The changes have resulted in movie theaters closing and "*the art-film distribution structures in the U.S. are in the process of collapsing.*" The offers we received from wary US distributors were for online options only. <https://www.siff.net/festival/my-love-affair-with-marriage>

SONY PICTURES IMAGEWORKS SETS UP A STUDIO IN MONTREAL, IT WILL CREATE 150 NEW JOBS They already have over 1000 employees in their studios in Los Angeles and Vancouver. Minimum starting pay will be \$22.50 an hour.



ANIMATOR ANDREAS DEJA DISCUSSES HIS DECADE-LONG PASSION PROJECT 'MUSHKA' The film premiered at Stuttgart and continues to make the festival rounds. The trailer suggests it is an exceptional work, beautifully made and it has powerful emotional content. <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/animators/andreas-deja-mushka-interview-228583.html>

'THE SUPER MARIO BROS. MOVIE' IS MOVING UP IN THE LIST OF THE TOP BILLION DOLLAR FEATURES As of May 27 it had grossed \$1,266,169,146. It has passed *Minions* and *The Incredibles* on the list. What does the success of this film tell us about the American taste in animation?



THE WORLD PREMIERE OF 'SLIDE' BY BILL PLYMPTON His latest animated feature will be held at Annecy, which runs June 11 - 18. He says they accepted it after seeing the rough cut. It will be in their prestigious "Contrechamp" competition. See the *Slide* trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYOpnjhQlJg>

OH NO! 'BABY SHARK'S BIG MOVIE' WILL BE RELEASED THIS YEAR It is being directed by Alan Foreman for Nickelodeon. I assume this is a feature created for really little kids. I was glad to

read it will go directly to the internet so it will not get an Oscar nomination.



THE FUN STARTS AT 7:30 PM AT THE CASTRO, SAT. JUNE 10

HOLLYWOOD'S ECONOMIC GUIDING PRINCIPAL Before Michael Eisner joined Disney he was president of Paramount Pictures (1976 to 1984). In 1981 he wrote an infamous internal memo that stated his belief that, "We have no obligation to make history. We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective." He became head of Disney from 1984 – 2005 and guided it through the historic period known as the Disney Renaissance.



DO YOU ENJOY SICK AND TWISTED ANIMATION? If yes, take a look at Ori Goldberg's *Don't Die on Me*, <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/shorts/dont-die-on-me-ori-goldberg-228431.html>

NETFLIX'S 'NIMONA' Care to see a weird offbeat trailer for a show coming to Netflix June 30? I

chuckled and watched it twice. It is a feature for kids.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tD5KUb7Xxjs>



DOC FEST HAS FOUR FILMS ONLINE THAT ARE ANIMATED OR PART-ANIMATED *The Girl From 7th Avenue: Pat Cleveland and the Runaway Revolution* by Antonio Contera. With more than 2,000 hand-painted watercolors, Antonio Contreras blends multiple disciplines to deliver a historical account of supermodel Pat Cleveland, who changed the way fashion looked at Black models and American designers. Animated, 20 min. long **Sat, Jun 3rd, 12:00 PM @ Roxie Theater House and streaming online**

Two One Two, by award winning filmmaker Shira Avni. It is a deeply intimate, handcrafted experimental animated documentary exploring neurodiversity, the loving bond between mother and child, and the process of (un)becoming a two-headed monster. Available **June 1, 12:00 AM - June 11, 11:59 PM, 2023 Streams online.**

Where the Light Enters by Neha Gautam A woman unravels how three generations in her family have been affected by intergenerational trauma starting with colonialism. It uses animation, archival and found footage to define what intergenerational healing means. It will be available **June 1, 12:00 AM - June 11, 11:59 PM, 2023 for online streaming.**

Fail First follows a young woman as she navigates the absurdities and intricacies of fighting her insurance company for access to treatment for her chronic illness. Part animated. Available **June 1, 12:00 AM - June 11, 11:59 PM, for online streaming trailer at**

<https://sfdocfest2023.eventive.org/films/643ce77c24224a002c09775a>



TOM SITO BOOK SIGNING AT THE CARTOON ART MUSEUM The photo includes

animation teacher Paul Naas in the red shirt and librarian Stewart Ng with his book in his hand. (Ng has built up the Alameda Public Library's animation art book collection.) Both have been members of ASIFA-SF for decades.

FRAMELINES' 47th ANNUAL SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL LGBTQ+ FILM FESTIVAL

June 14-24 At The CASTRO, streaming June 24-July 2

The 11 day event will show 90 films including three that are animated. *Y* by Matea Kovač from Zagreb is an indulgent work that is quite memorable. Her film is quite playful, erotic, quite graphic and well drawn. The images are females enjoying themselves, with lots of extreme close ups. She works as a video artist in Zagreb.

Falling, is a 13 minute action adventure film about an island warrior who falls into a mysterious underwater world after being wounded in battle. When the octopus who rescues him transforms into a handsome young man, they fall in love and an epic adventure begins. Directed by Daniel Sousa, Dean Hamer, Joe Wilson Sound and Music by Dan Golden Executive Producers Judith Light, Daniel Karlake, Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu Produced by Qwaves in association with Kanaka Pakipika.

Diomysus by Emily Elizabeth Morus-Jones is a film about polyamorous relationships with mice puppets talking about consenting sexual relationships between three or more consenting adults. It was shown on BBC3 in the UK.

*******NEWS ABOUT DISNEY*******

“WE HAVE NO CHOICE:” DISNEY AND FLORIDA ARE NOW LOCKED IN A HIGH-STAKES LEGAL FIGHT Disney will likely move to stay in the new special district board's suit, filed in state court, until resolution of its case. The judge assigned to the case has ruled against DeSantis in a similar First Amendment case so DeSantis wants a different judge. If DeSantis doesn't win he will probably appeal it to the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, where more than half of the judges were appointed by former President Donald Trump.

DISNEY CANCELS BUILDING A BILLION DOLLAR CAMPUS IN FLORIDA DUE TO ITS BATTLE WITH DeSANTIS Disney was going to move 2000 employees to Florida, so DeSantis' anti-gay stand will cost the state tax revenue from both

income they would have gotten from the construction project and the taxes that employees new to the state would have paid.

DISNEY IS CLOSING ITS GALACTIC STARCROISER HOTEL IN FLORIDA It was part of an ultra-ambitious and rather silly sounding Star Wars attraction that opened with much fanfare in March 2022. If you want to enjoy a night in a fake starship you have until sometime in September to get there. I bet you have longed to pretend you are sailing through space.

THE DISNEY+ LOSS OF THE RIGHTS TO STREAM CRICKET IN INDIA HAS RESULTED IN THE LOSS OF MILLIONS OF SUBSCRIBERS Streaming has been a major income producer for the corporation so a drop in the number of Disney+ subscribers is a serious concern for them. The loss of 4 million subscribers in the first three months of the year must come as a shock as the reason for the loss is hard for Westerners to understand. Most of the lost subscribers came from Disney+ Hotstar in India after the company lost streaming rights to Indian Premier League cricket matches. Disney also added more than 1 million new customers in the quarter and they still have an impressive number of subscribers, **about 157.8 million.**

The company acts like they are about to panic. The slight downturn in the company income has resulted in plans to reduce production of animation. They will probably cut current shows that don't have high ratings and be more critical about taking on new projects.

DISNEY HIT WITH INVESTOR LAWSUIT OVER ALLEGED "COST-SHIFTING SCHEME" IN STREAMING DIVISION Investors are questioning former CEO Bob Chapek's optimistic plan for the growth and expected profitability of Disney+. They feel he misled them with a lofty idea of what future growth and profitability would be from the streaming service.

Apparently the recent losses have resulted in this lawsuit filed by investors who claim the entertainment giant misled them. The corporation says, "We are aware of the complaint and intend to defend vigorously against it in court."

ENJOY *Elegy of Elephant*, 2022, is a tender, lovely short by Sijie Lu a graduate from the Communication

University of China. It just won a prize at Stuttgart. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgCLGVLRDI>



MOVE SUMMIT
22 - 24 February 2023 Pleasance,
Edinburgh, Scotland
CONNECTING SCOTLAND, THE UNITED
KINGDOM, AND THE INTERNATIONAL
ANIMATION COMMUNITY

After a two-year hiatus due to Covid, it felt great to be back in Edinburgh for the MOVE Summit. The three-day event brings together not just the Scottish animation industry but people from all over the world to give presentations and workshops. There were as many as four separate rooms full to capacity at times with workshops and presentations in the Pleasance Compound. This historic compound is also one of the main venues of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and derives its name from the Scottish word pleasance, meaning a park or garden.



The Pleasance Compound

Growing from a one-day event in 2017, MOVE has become a three-day symposium bringing

together creatives from film, television, advertising, games, and the visual arts. One full day was devoted to programs for students and young animators. The other two days focused on industry content for professionals.



Wednesday, Emerging Talent Day, began with a brief welcome by MC Caroline Parkinson. By 9 AM we got down to business on the main stage with a discussion with Production Assistant Marion Crocker; Eilidh Brown, a rigging TD; and Dan McCance who does lighting and compositing gave the students an insight into alternative careers in the animation industry in *Roles Behind the Film*.

All three of the speakers work at the multi-award winning animation and VFX studio Axis. With studios in Glasgow, Bristol, and London, Axis has earned a global reputation for creating commissioned and original work for film, television, games, and theme parks. The studio's work has appeared in productions by Netflix, HBO, and Microsoft to name just a few of their clients.

Next I gave a lesson on how to pitch your project. After my presentation, the students could put what they had learned into practice in the *Pitching Creative Challenge*. This year I was joined by Sami Young, Heather McManus, and Kyle Maxwell from Hee Haw Studio in Edinburgh in setting the challenge. Richard Scott, CEO and founder of Axis gave the students a short introduction. Then the Hee Haw trio and I introduced our two challenges. Because most of the students had never pitched before I made my topic very broad. I asked them to create a pitch for a short animated film, television series, or public service announcement and I told the group that I wanted to see a rough storyboard, character design, and a proposed budget. I also wanted visuals on the large sheets of paper that we provided.

The other pitch, from Hee Haw, was a very specific challenge. They asked the students to create a pitch about an ecological project. Then it was time for the students to break up into small groups, select one of the two challenges and get to work. They had 1 ½ hours to complete their presentations.

While they worked, Richard Scott, the Hee Haw team and I circulated among the groups ready to answer questions. We were joined by Axis co-founder and director Dana Dorian; Sueann Rochester, founder and managing director of Wild Child Animation; and Wild Child operations and training manager Suzie Brearley. The room was a beehive of activity.

When it came time to give their pitches, Richard Scott acted as master of ceremonies and timekeeper. After each presentation the Hee Haw team and I offered critiques. I was surprised to learn that all of the groups had opted for my challenge.

I have taught pitching for several years at MOVE. This year the quality of the student's pitches was exceptionally high. There were two presentations that could realistically be produced and I was very proud of all of them.

Later in the day, there was a panel discussion on how to be a freelancer. The students could also attend workshops on *Storyboarding as a Language* given by storyboard artist Marco Maldonato from Berlin. Lighting and compositing expert at Axis Studio Daniel McCance gave his audience tips on how to *Make Your Showreel Shine* using his guidelines to effective cinematic lighting with Unreal Engine. They could also sign up for *Creative Reviews* which gave them 15 minutes with an industry expert to receive portfolio or project advice.

The day ended with two animation legends giving separate talks. First up was French animation director and master of the drawing board Kristof Serrand. His presentation about his career was fully illustrated with numerous slides. Kristof was an animation director at Dreamworks working on *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Kung Fu Panda*, and *Penguins of Madagascar* to name just a few of the well-known films that he had worked on.

In 2020 he moved back to Paris and is currently a supervising animator at Netflix. He describes this job as “. . . mainly to support Netflix projects that are created in Los Angeles and which are then manufactured by partners around the world”. Kristof is assigned to Europe but also supervises projects in Africa and the Middle East. His talks are

full of useful information and peppered with lots of entertaining stories. He is also a lovely gentleman.

The final speaker of the day was Fergal Brennan, technical director on Cartoon Saloon's *My Father's Dragon*. The film, directed by Nora Twomey (*The Breadwinner*), is inspired by the Newberry-honored children's book of the same name by Ruth Stiles Gannett Kahn.

Fergal took the audience on a behind-the-scenes tour of *My Father's Dragon*, explaining the process of developing an animation pipeline for a feature film. He also talked about the up and downsides of remote working during lockdown and that remote working had created a special bond between the crew.

Thursday began for me with a talk by Aardman director Matthew Walker. Any new project from Aardman Studio is exciting me so I was delighted to hear Matthew, creator and director of their new comedy television series tell us about *Lloyd of the Flies*. The series is about Lloyd B. Fly, a housefly who is the middle child of 451 children. He lives with his parents, his little sister PB and their 225 maggot siblings inside their compost bin home. Lloyd, PB, and Lloyd's best friend, Abacus Woodlouse go on adventures and explore the world outside their compost bin.

Even though the show is aimed at 7 to 10-year-olds I know that I will love it. I am a big *Shaun the Sheep* and *Timmy Time* fan and those shows are certainly aimed at my demographic. Aardman continues to create wonderful offbeat characters that can't help but make you smile.

Nik and I presented *Toons and Tunes*, our trip through the history of animation through music. Many of the films that we showed such as the Fleischer Brothers *Sing You Sinners!* (1930) had never been seen by most of our audience. We had a full house and a lot of excellent questions were asked about the films.

I was looking forward to hearing director Iain Gardner and his team talk about their latest project, *A Bear Named Wojtek* on Friday afternoon. Unfortunately, we had to leave on Friday morning, but Iain was kind enough to give me a private interview on Thursday.

Based on a fascinating true story, *Wojtek*, a Syrian brown bear, was orphaned after his mother was killed by hunters. In 1942 the bear cub was discovered in a market in the Iranian Mountains by a group of Polish soldiers who were trekking across the Middle East to Alexandria, Egypt to join the British

forces. The young bear was adopted by the Polish soldiers, becoming more than just a mascot to the regiment.



Wojtek grew to over 1.8 meters (5 foot 9 inches) weighing nearly 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds). He learned to march alongside the troops and he enjoyed a cigarette and beer just like any other soldier. He also learned to salute. During the heat of battle of Monte Cassino, he carried heavy mortar shells to the soldiers.

Wojtek was officially enlisted into the army as a private. He was given a ration book and ate the same meals his fellow soldiers ate. He was eventually promoted to the rank of corporal. After the war, the 22nd Artillery Supply Company of the Polish II Corps, including Wojtek, was transported to Glasgow and stationed in Winfield Park. After their demobilization, the bear went to live in Edinburgh Zoo. His zoo keeper said that the bear would get very excited when a visitor spoke in Polish to him. Wojtek died in 1963 at the age of 21.

The script is by Polish writer Wojciech Lopianka and directed by Gardner, the project is a Polish-British co-production financed by the Polish Film Institute, Screen Scotland, and the UK government-supported Young Audience Content Fund. Gardner stressed that the hand-drawn film will not be a "cartoon", rather it is an animated historically accurate account of Wojtek's life.

A noted British actor will voice the role of the zoo keeper and multi-Oscar-winning composer Normand Roger will compose the music. The film is

being shot in English and then the Polish team will revoice it in Polish.



Wojtek is not only a hero in Scotland. There are many statues of him in both countries honoring this remarkable bear. If all goes as planned, the 28-minute film will premier this Autumn. I am intrigued by the story and looking forward to seeing the film.

Along with all of the talks and presentations, there was also an exhibition area. It was an opportunity for studios to show off their work and talk about what they are looking for in potential new employees. I was particularly interested to learn about the National Library of Scotland's Moving Image Archive. With over 3,000 clips and full-length films ranging from home movies, documentaries, and industry to entertainment films, the National Library preserves and promotes access to films capturing Scotland and her people from the early days of filmmaking to the present. Some of their collection is available online.



The Ray and Diane Harryhausen Foundation exhibition

The Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation is located in Edinburgh. Set up by Ray in 1986, it houses more than 5,000 items from his films including armatures, models, molds, artwork and miniatures. The Foundation's display in the Exhibition Hall included a few of Ray's original models.

During our two days at MOVE, there were opportunities to socialize and catch up with old friends. At the end of Student Day, there was a delicious speaker's dinner at an Indian Restaurant. On Thursday the evening began with a networking reception with food and drink at the Pleasance Café. Then we moved on to OX184, a bar and restaurant in Old Town, for the Drink and Draw party hosted by Animade, a London-based animation company.

A big thank you for inviting me to be part of MOVE Summit again to Tom Bryant, co-founder of MOVE. He is its guiding light and operations and finance manager. He also is the founder and managing director of the Edinburgh-based animation and visual effects studio Interference Pattern.

Another thank you goes to Caroline Parkinson. She is a MOVE co-organizer and the energetic mistress of ceremonies on the main stage for all three days.

Last, but far from least, a very big thank you goes to Lucy Teire who takes care of the nuts and bolts that hold MOVE together. Along with putting together the Industry Day's programs, she took great care of all of the guests and made sure that we knew when and where we had to be.

Edinburgh is a beautiful city that I have grown to love. It is full of history and is very walkable. This year I discovered a new (and for me) very important fact about the city. Not only does Edinburgh have more Mexican restaurants than I have seen in any other European city, the one Nik and I ate at, Mariachi Restaurant, came as a great surprise. It serves the best, most authentic, Mexican food we have eaten in Europe outside of my kitchen. I don't quite understand Edinburgh's love of Mexican food but I am glad that it does.

I am already looking forward to the 2024 edition of MOVE Summit. The dates have not been set yet but I imagine that it will be in February. You can find out more about MOVE at: [www;movesummit.com](http://www.movesummit.com)



22nd MONSTRA ANIMATED FESTIVAL OF LISBON

15 – 26 March 2023, Lisbon, Portugal
By Nancy Denney Phelps

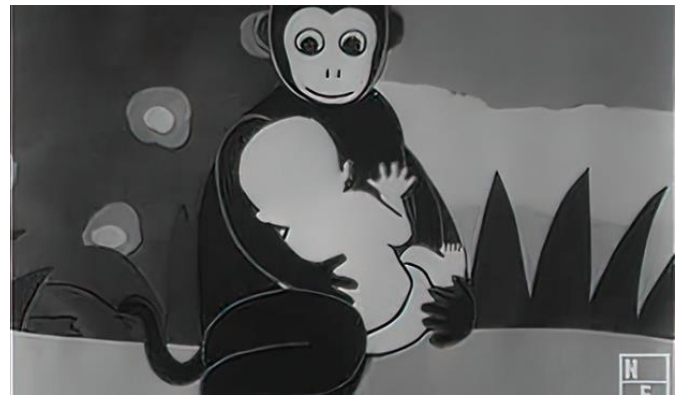
The 22nd edition of the MONSTRA Animation Festival had much to celebrate. It was no coincidence that the festival declared 2023 the Year of Japan. Portugal has a strong fascination and connection with the Orient and Japan in particular; almost 5 Centuries ago Portuguese sailors were the first Westerners to sail to the coast of Japan. The Japanese were fascinated by the Portuguese because of their ships, exotic appearance, dress, language and merchandise and they depicted these foreigners in great detail in paintings and on screens.

Another cause for celebration this year is that one hundred years ago the illustrator Joaquim Guerreiro directed *O Pesadelo do Antonio Maria (The Nightmare of Antonio Maria)*, the first known Portuguese animated film. Exactly one hundred years after the birth of Portuguese animation, Joao Gonzalez's *Ice Merchants* became the first Portuguese animation to be awarded the Leitz Cine Discovery Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival. The tender story of family love went on to become the first Portuguese film to be nominated for an Academy Award.

Classic animated films were first made in Japan in 1910. The oldest surviving example of Japanese animation, *Namakura Gatana (Blunt Sword)* by Junichi Kouchi, dates back to 1917. Unfortunately, most of the earliest animated films were lost following a massive earthquake in Tokyo in 1923. *The Blunt Sword* was discovered by an Osaka film historian in 2007 and expanded with additional found footage in 2014.

The program *Pioneers of Japanese Animation* screened the 9-minute film *The Whale* by Noburo Ofuji. He originally made the film in 1927 as a silent black and white film, using shadow puppets. He remade *The Whale* in 1952 inspired by the possibility to use color. For the second version he used cutouts of transparent colored cellophane silhouettes and a multiplane camera. *The Whale* was the first Asian animated film shown at the

Cannes Film Festival in 1953.



Nonsense Story, Vol.1: Monkey Island

Kenzo Masaoka's 1930 *The Monkey's Island* was also part of the *Pioneers of Japanese Animation* program. In the 24-minute film a baby is thrown out of a wrecked ship and drifts onto an island populated by apes. He is brought up by them, but eventually trouble erupts and he is ostracized because he doesn't have a tail.

Kihachiro Kawamoto is best known as a stop motion puppet maker. In 2003 he directed *Winter Days*. The 39-minute piece, which the Western World would call an "Exquisite Corpse" film, was a collaboration by poets and animators from around the world to create what is known in Japan as a Visual Renku.

A Renku is a style of poetry specific to Japan made up of alternating three- and two-line stanzas. For the film, each poet created a verse and 35 animators from around the world animated a verse in their own style.

Tribute was paid to Renzo and Sayoko Kinoshita, animators and founders of the Hiroshima International Animation Festival in 1985. The couple made short films at their Studio Lotus. Many of them were in the animated documentary genre such as *Pica-dom*, the powerful antiwar film that depicts the horrors of the bombing of Hiroshima.

Their 1972 film *Made in Japan* satirizes in a non-narrative manner the "economic animal" that Japan was at that time. It also predicted the economic recession of the 1970's long before most Japanese saw what was coming.



Renzo and Sayoko continued their message about the futility of war with *The Last Air Raid Kumagaya* (1993). The 29-minute film is based on historical records, interviews with witnesses/survivors, and documents belonging to survivors. It is critical of domestic propaganda.

The multi award winning Japanese animator Koji Yamamura introduced a retrospective of his work. Beginning with his 2002 Oscar nominated film *Mount Head*, the program took us down to his very clever 2017 *Notes On Monstropedia*. The film is an animated archive of imaginary monsters written by a fictitious monsterologist in Medieval Europe.

Koji also created the fanciful festival logo, poster, the beautiful trailer and he organized two programs. One screening introduced the films of Japanese Masters Kihachiro Kawamoto, Tadanari Okamoto, and Taku Furukawa who used classic Japanese subject matter and style while exploring different animation techniques to tell traditional stories.

Koji's second presentation focused on the new generation of young Japanese animators. They are considered the 3rd generation of Japanese animators. The outstanding rising star is Yamamura's student Atsushi Wada. His 3-minute film, *My Exercise*, featuring a chubby boy doing exercises with his dog, is extremely humorous. It has had great success on the festival circuit and was subsequently turned into an animated game.

No retrospective of Japanese animation would be complete without a tribute to the legendary Studio Ghibli. Miyazaki has said that *Porco Rosso* (1992) is not a film that he is particularly fond of. I have watched this film about the WWII flying ace Marco Pagot, better known as Porco Rosso, over and over and it is still a favorite film of mine. Along with *Porco Rosso*, Miyazaki's 2008 film *Ponyo* was also shown.

When I think of Japanese animation abstract animation doesn't come to mind. The Japanese



Porco Rosso

Abstract Animation Panaroma opened my eyes to a whole new world of film. The 16 abstract films in the program explored traditional hand-drawn animation, video composition, camera less direct on film scratching, drawing or painting.

The centerpieces of any festival are the competition programs. This year at MONSTRA there were very few surprises when it came to the awards. The juries selected excellent, strong films that for the most part have been awarded at other festivals or award ceremonies. A complete list of all of the winning films is at the end of this article.

The big winner of the festival was Joao Gonzalez with his beautiful 14-minute film *Ice Merchants*. Along with its Oscar nomination the film has already won an Annie and the Leitz Cine Discovery Prize at the Cannes Film Festival. At MONSTRA the beautifully crafted film about grief, loss, memories and familial love took home the Grand Prix, the Vasco Granja Award for Best Portuguese Film, plus the coveted Audience Award.

I am a huge fan of Estonian animation. I appreciate their sense of absurdist humor, so I was delighted when Priit Tender received the MONSTRA Short Film Grand Prix for *Dog Apartment*. Based on the poem *To Be a Dog-Apartment* by Estonian surrealist poet Andres Ehin, the film is clever, witty, and yet sad in equal parts. The stop motion puppet animation is about an aging, over the hill ballet dancer and his barking apartment. His dancing career over, he has been relegated to a Soviet state collective farm where he is being driven crazy by the vicious barking of the dog head in his room who demands to be fed. Every day he drives through the rain drenched wasteland to his job at a dairy. There he performs graceful ballet moves to *Swan Lake* for an audience of dairy cows.



The soothing music and graceful moves stimulate the cows milk production. He is paid in sausages, which he feeds to the dog-apartment to keep it calm and temporarily quiet.

Characters also include a hatchet-headed chicken and a fish swimming in milk in a locked guitar case. Truly my sort of film.

An important part of MONSTRA is Monstrinha, which screens films especially for young audiences. Two programs were designed for 3- to 5-year-olds. Another screening featured animation for 6- to 9-year-olds, and finally a program of more sophisticated short films for 10- to 14-year olds was shown. Two other screenings were designed with films to delight the entire family.

Monstrinha does not end when the festival is over. It continues year around to reach out to young people, not only in Lisbon but in more than 140 other Portuguese cities as well. Through Monstrinha children are able to watch animated film and learn about making animation at hands-on workshops.

Ice Merchants added the Monstrinha Grand Prix to its laurels. Czech Republic animator Lucie Sunkova's lovely film *Suzie in the Garden* received a special mention in the Monstrinha category. Suzie is a little girl who goes with her parents to their allotment outside of their city. In the course of her explorations, she discovers a secret garden. Whose garden is it? The answer is slowly revealed as Suzie finds a lost key on the garden path.

In talking about the film Lucie said "I see *Suzie in the Garden* as a dialogue with childhood. I tried to enter into the thinking of the little girl, to understand her imagination, fears, and charming childishness. I tried to create a film that would speak a language understandable to children and at the same time be able to evoke memories of moments and situations we experienced as a child." I enjoyed

the film very much and think that she accomplished what she set out to do.

Although Swiss animator Marina Rosset's 9-minute hand-drawn film *The Queen of the Foxes* was in a children's program, it is equally touching for adults as well as children. The queen of the foxes is terribly sad. In an attempt to cheer her up and make her smile again, her worried subjects scour the city late at night, rummaging through the human's trash cans, in search of all of the love letters that were never sent. They lay the letters full of declarations of love at the queen's feet to show her how loved she is. In the end the queen gets something that she didn't even know that she was missing, a sense of well-being that knowing that you are loved gives you. The queen smiles again and life for the foxes in the forest can go back to normal. *Queen of the Foxes* has won numerous awards. At MONSTRA it received the Audience Award for Best Children's Film.



The Suspect

For 16 editions of MONSTRA, the Lisbon Puppet Museum has hosted special exhibits of art work from films presented at the festival. This year in honor of 100 years of Portuguese animation, the exhibition was *A Journey into the World of Portuguese Animation Puppets*. The exhibition room was full of memorabilia from past and present stop motion films. It was a pleasure to see sets and puppets from Jose Miguel Ribeiro's 1999 classic film *The Suspect*. The film, about a killer loose on a train, is one of my favorite films and its ending, ala Hitchcock, always makes me smile.

A few years ago, the MONSTRA exhibition at the Puppet Museum was devoted to Bruno Caetano's delightful film *The Peculiar Crimes of Oddball Mr. Jay*. Bruno is a master of intricate set

building. His craftsmanship and attention to detail make his sets stand out. It was lovely to see his work again included in this exhibition.

The exhibition also featured pieces from very recent films such as the jackets and set from Monica Santos' *The Pink Jacket* which was in competition at the current festival. We were also given a glimpse into the future with the paper puppets from Joana Imaginà Rio's *The Time Keepers House* which premiered at this year's MONSTRA.

No visit to Lisbon would be complete without a visit to the Marionette Museum. Founded in 1987, it moved into its permanent home in the historic Convento das Berardas in 2001. Built under the reign of King Joao IV, the convent is located in Lisbon's Barrio Alto district. The museum's original goal was to preserve the tradition of Portuguese traveling puppet theatres and operas. Over the years the museum has grown to house over 1,000 puppets, some of them dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries, from around the world. The collection also now displays props and masks related to the art of puppetry.

In honor of this year's featured country Japan, the Museu de Oriente hosted *Koji Yamamura – Dozens of Drawings*, an exhibition of over 50 original drawings by the renowned Japanese animator. Art work from Koji's 2002 Academy Award nominated film *Mount Head*, feature film *Dozens of Norths* (2021), the multi-award-winning *Franz Kafka's Country Doctor*, and the 2011 film *Muybridge's Strings* were on display.

As part of the exhibition Koji conducted a Masterclass and also led a guided tour of the exhibition.

Opened in 2008 in a beautiful building on Lisbon's waterfront, the Museu de Oriente is a multicultural museum that preserves the heritage of the link between Asian countries and the Portuguese presence in the Far East. Their special exhibitions along with an extensive permanent collection is well worth a visit.

Multi award winning German director and professor of animation Raimund Krumme believes that animation can have all kinds of visual expressions, such as graphics, theatre, dance, or even architecture. His exhibition at the Sociedade Nacional de Bela Artes (National Society of Fine Arts), *Traces of Movement*, encompassed the past and present of Krumme's work, combining graphic research, studies, and original drawings from some of his films. He also created direct spontaneous

paintings on the museum's gallery walls. The exhibit was only up during the festival and the spontaneous paintings only existed during the exhibition.



Raimund Krumme's spontaneous paintings

The National Society of Fine Arts building dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. It is a valuable example of the Portuguese architectural eclecticism. Along with their special exhibitions the Society has a wonderful permanent collection representing different periods of Portuguese art.

My favorite exhibition, *The Centenary of Portuguese Animation Cinema: 100 Years, 100 Films* was held at the Portuguese Cinema Museum. The exhibition showcased over 100 images representing the rich diversity, creativity, and originality of the nation's animators.

The first Portuguese animated film is credited to Joaquim Guerreiro who was a pioneer in comics as well as in animation. *O Pesadelo de Antonio Maria* was released on 25 January 1923. It features a caricature of Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Maria de Silva as he walks home from his office. The film was considered lost for many years but in the late 1990's, 150 of the original drawings of this animated short were rediscovered by a collector in a second-hand bookstore. In 2001 a reconstruction of the movie was made.

The Portuguese Cinema Museum is a wonderful place to visit. Along with their revolving exhibitions they also have a permanent interactive pre-cinema exhibition. It is a chronological journey that begins with shadow puppet shows and their relationship to cinema, passing through the magic lanterns, and all of the inventions of the 18th and 19th century that were animating images before the projector was invented. The museum also has an extensive film equipment collection.

Along with two screening rooms dedicated to showing classic films. the center is home to a conservation center, movie vault, and a nitrate safe vault. There is also a well-stocked bookstore catering to cinephiles and a restaurant with inside dining and

outdoor patio service. The food is delicious and very reasonably priced.

Festival guests stay at the historic Hotel California. Each room is named after a different movie or director. The rooms are decorated with classic movie posters of the film or star the room is named after. This year we stayed with German director Wim Wenders and posters from *Paris Texas*. In previous years Nik and I have slept in the *Taxi Driver* room with Travis Bickel looking down at us and in the Steve McQueen room with a *The Great Escape* movie poster. When you enter the elevator, you are greeted by a life-sized photo of either Audrey Hepburn or Humphrey Bogart. The hotel is a place for any cinema buff to feel right at home.



Nancy with Martin Smatana and his puppets from *THE KITE*

Along with all of the films and exhibitions MONSTRA also had 13 presentations by noted members of the film community. Among those speaking were Michael Dudok De Wit, Jose Miguel Ribeiro, **Martin Smatana**, Maya Yonesho, and Radostina Neykova.

My favorite presentation was Joan Gratz's *The Journey from High Art to Cat Videos*. She compared her pioneering clay painting techniques, that was used in her 1992 Academy Award winning film *Mona Lisa Descending a Staircase*, with her recent mixed media cat videos. That's right, cat videos! It was one of the funniest animation presentations I have ever seen. It defies words!

Over the 12 days, Festival Director Fernando Galrito created an amazing, memorable tribute not only to 100 years of Portuguese animation, but to animation worldwide. It took a 200-page catalogue to showcase every competition film, special presentations, exhibitions, and special events. The

2023 Edition of MONSTRA was quite an achievement.

A warm thank you goes out to Galrito and his wonderful, hard-working staff. A special thank you goes to Rui Pereira, Production and Program Coordinator, for taking care of all of the details of my visit.

I also must give a special thank you to Vitor Carrico of the Lisbon Tourist Office for making my trip to his beautiful city for the festival possible.

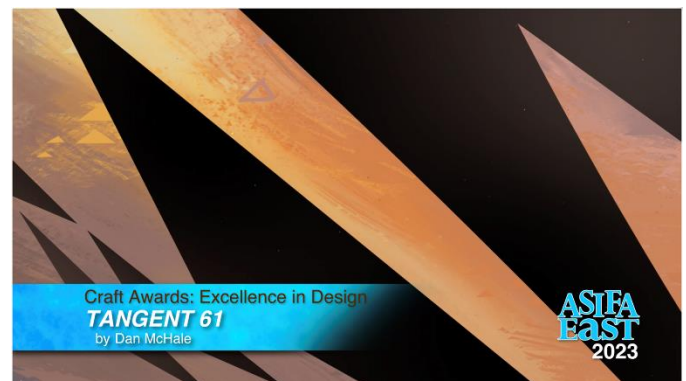
After this year's spectacular festival, I can't imagine what Galrito will do to top the 2023 edition but I am looking forward to seeing what he will have in store for us next year. In 2024 MONSTRA will be held between 7 – 17 March. The guest country will be Ireland and Tomm Moore is already hard at work preparing the poster illustration for it.

You can learn more about MONSTRA 2023 and how your film can be submitted for the 2024 edition at: <https://monstrafestival.com>

'GREMLINS: SECRETS OF THE MOGWAI'

Did you grow up loving the Gremlins? The *Hollywood Reporter's* writer did and he says it captures the spirit of the original films. He concluded, "Fortunately, *Secrets of the Mogwai* gets the spirit of the movies. None of the gaps it fills in were quite necessary, yet the way it fills in those gaps is done with some heart, some humor and some welcome, franchise-correcting authenticity. I'm ready for more."

Last minute news



DAN McHALE IS A WINNER

His short film *Tangent 61* has won the "craft award for Excellence in Design" at the ASIFA-East Animation Festival.

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**ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN
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Special thanks and congratulations to Nancy Denney-Phelps who was given the Giannalberto Bendazzi Award in Paris. She represents our chapter on the international ASIFA board. Emily Berk is our webmaster, and Eihway Su keeps our email list and does a dozen other things.

ASIFA-SF is a chapter of: Association Internationale du Film d'Animation with over 40 chapters around the world. Membership is normally \$21 a year with the e-mailed newsletter, but right now we have a **COVID 19 SPECIAL OFFER** As we get back in action we are only asking \$15 a year, or \$30 if you wish to support the international as well. And get access to their magazine/newsletter.

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