

**ASIFA**  
THE INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION ASSOCIATION  
March 2019



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**P.O. BOX 225263**  
**SF, CA 94122**



**BEST ANIMATED FILM AT FRANCE'S CAESAR AWARDS** *Dilili in Paris* by Michel Ocelot. The runners up were *Asterix: The Secret of the Magic Potion*, by Alexandre Astier and Louis Clichy and *Pachamama*, by Juan Antin.

**ANNIE AWARDS: 'SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE' WINS BEST ANIMATED FEATURE** It garnered top honors across six additional categories including Directing, Character Animation, Character Design, Production Design, Writing and Editorial. Japan's *Mirai* from Studio Chizu and by writer-director Mamoru Hosoda won Best Animated Feature-Independent. In the new category Best Virtual Reality Production, the award went to *Crow: The Legend* (Baobab Studios). Best Animated Short Subject was *Weekends* (Past Lives Productions); Best Animated TV/Broadcast Commercial was *Greenpeace 'There's a Rang-Tan in My Bedroom'* (Passion Animation Studios); Best General Audience Animated TV/Broadcast Production was *BoJack Horseman Eps. 'The Dog Days are Over'* (Torante Productions, LLC for Netflix); Best Animated TV/Broadcast Production for Children was *Hilda* (Hilda Productions Limited, a Silvergate Media Company, Netflix Inc. and Mercury Filmworks); Best Animated TV/Broadcast Production for Preschool Children was *Ask the StoryBots* (JibJab Bros. Studios for Netflix); and Outstanding Achievement for Character Animation in a Live Action Production was *Mary Poppins Returns* (Walt Disney Pictures).

**AT THE ACE AWARD (EDITORS)** *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse* won several ACE Eddie Awards including the best edited animated feature film.

**THE VISUAL EFFECTS SOCIETY GAVE 'SPIDERMAN'** the best Visual Effects in an Animated Feature award and Miles Morales was named the Outstanding Animated Character in an Animated Feature.

**IN THE UK 'SPIDERMAN' WON** the Best Animated Feature at the BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Awards).

**THE ART DIRECTORS GUILD AWARDS WENT TO** *Isle of Dogs*. Production Designers: Adam Stockhausen, Paul Harrod

**AT SUNDANCE THE ANIMATION AWARD FOR BEST SHORT WENT TO** *Reneepoptosis*: directed by Renee Zhan.

**SPAIN'S GOYA AWARDS** for best animated feature went to *Another Day of Life* by Damian Nenow and Raul de la Fuente. The best animated short film was *Cazatalentos* by Jose Herrsera.

**'TOY STORY 4' AD WAS SHOWN AT THE SUPER BOWL** <https://www.awn.com/news/watch-disney-pixar-unveils-sneak-peek-toy-story-4-new-super-bowl-spot>

**SF'S COMICS FEST IS COMING BACK!** It happens March 1st through March 10. The city-wide event coincides with Will Eisner Week. Celebrate San Francisco comics culture (Past, Present, and Future). Events will be all around the city and they include workshops, signings and talks at the Cartoon Art Museum.

**ANIMATED M&M SUPER BOWL COMMERCIALS**  
<https://www.msn.com/en-us/sports/superbowl/ad-meter-2019-mandms/vi-BBSXxRz>

**TEASER TRAILER FOR 'FROZEN' SEQUEL IS ONLINE** If you find a princess running into the ocean interesting you might like the ad. I didn't.  
<http://www.animationscoop.com/teaser-trailer-disneys-frozen-2/>

#### LOCAL SCREENINGS

**Sunday, March 24: ALBANY FILM FEST - ! All-Day Screening** An eclectic mix of independent short films (documentary, drama, comedy, and animation) from the Bay Area, the nation, and the world. Six themed shows are followed by filmmaker panels. <http://www.albanyfilmfest.org>

**Saturday, March 23, EXPERIMENTAL ANIMATION AT ATA**, Craig Baldwin says he will show the SF debut of a most marvelous shadow puppet show, *Life or Theatre?* by Lydia Greer and Caryl Kietz. It deals with "the tragic tales of two Berlin women who changed art history. Lotte Reiniger fashioned a sublime silhouette animation style in the 1930s, whilst Charlotte Salomon opened up a new expansive space between painting and diary... We're delighted to share another Berliner, Sylvia Schedelbauer's multiple award winning *Wishing Well*." Also being shown will be Janie Gelser's *Magnetic Sleep*, Nina Paley's *You Gotta Believe*, a work by Lewis Klahr and Suzzie Roche and several other films. 8:30 PM. \$7.00, 992 Valencia in SF.

**MARCH 21-24, GLAS ANIMATION FESTIVAL in BERKELEY** <https://www.glasanimation.com>



**PIXAR'S RALPH EGLESTON REFLECTS ON THE BIRTH OF 'TOY STORY,' MEETING STEVE JOBS**

On Nov. 22, 1995, the animation world began a seminal change with the theatrical debut of *Toy Story*, the first computer-animated feature, and Ralph Eggleston was there to help make it happen. "I don't think there were too many people at the time who thought we were going to pull this off, much less make a film that focused on exactly the right thing, which was storytelling," he admits.

"We mostly came from traditional animation," says Eggleston, who joined the Pixar team company in 1993. "I knew nothing about computers. They were actually writing the software and building the hardware to make *Toy Story* as we were building the story."

They developed new ways of working, with collaboration between artists and engineers. "I had to learn how to verbalize art in the drawings [because] the people I was working with had varying degrees of ability to look at a two-dimensional drawing and transfer it into a three-dimensional image."

He put in some long hours along the way, and that's how one morning Eggleston came to meet Pixar co-founder Steve Jobs. "I'd stayed awake all night to finish, and I fell asleep at my desk, because we did that when we were young. I went to take a shower on-site, and when I went back to my office there was a bearded guy with a white T-shirt and shorts. He looked like a homeless guy. It kind of scared me at first, until he introduced himself, and it was Steve Jobs."

Jobs asked if Eggleston could operate a computer for him. "The only place where we could look at color-corrected computer imagery at the time was this one special computer, and not that many people knew how to operate it," he says.

Eggleston, now 53, went on to win an Oscar in 2002 for directing the animated short *For the Birds* and has worked on many animated features in various capacities, including production designing *Wall-E*, *Inside Out* and, most recently, the Oscar-nominated *Incredibles 2*.

On Feb. 2, 2019 the 26-year Pixar veteran and Oscar-winning director, animator and art director received ASIFA-Hollywood's Winsor McCay Award for career achievement at the 46th annual Annie Awards. An

award was also presented to casting director and voice director/actress Andrea Romano, and another was given in memory of the late Frank Braxton, the first African-American animator for a major Hollywood studio (Warner Bros.).

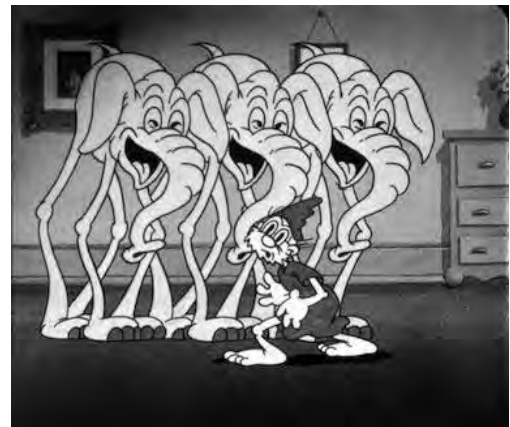
**DISNEY FILM CHIEF ALAN HORN TALKS ABOUT PIXAR POST-JOHN LASSETER**

He was a perfect politician when asked by the *Hollywood Reporter* about the studio. They asked him "How have Pixar Animation and Disney Animation adjusted to John Lasseter's exit?" He replied, "I'm incredibly proud of the way our animation studios have handled the transition, and that is due to the passionate, dedicated people who call these studios home and the leadership of Pete Docter and Jim Morris at Pixar and Jennifer Lee and Andrew Millstein at Disney Animation."

**DISNEY HAD YET ANOTHER FINE QUARTER**

The news sent shares 2 percent higher after the closing bell. Analysts were expecting Disney to earn \$1.54 in its first fiscal quarter of 2019 on \$15.16 billion in revenue. Disney grew its sales in two of its segments, media networks and parks, experiences and consumer products, but sales shrank 27% at studio entertainment and 1% at direct-to-consumer and international. Disney is expecting to close its \$71 billion partial acquisition of 21st Century Fox by the end of June and launch its Disney+ streaming service by the end of the year. CEO Bob Iger addressed both when he spoke to analysts during a conference call.

The company's media networks segment saw a 7% rise in revenue to \$5.9 billion and 7% gain in operating income to \$1.3 billion, though the cable networks unit of that segment saw declining operating income due in part to rising costs at ESPN, even as ad and affiliate revenue at the sports network grew. Disney also said that ESPN experienced a decline in subscribers, as it has over the past few years.



**HOLLYWOOD PRESENTED A PROGRAM OF ANIMATION THEY HELPED RESTORE**

Titles included *Jasper Goes Hunting* (1944), *A Hatful of Dreams* (1944), *Pink Elephants* (1937), *The Banker's Daughter*

(1933) and *Caviar* (1930), all restorations funded by ASIFA-Hollywood. Two additional titles, *Old Man of the Mountain* (1933) and *Freight Yard Symphony* (1963) were also screened.

**THE WORLD BENCHMARK FOR ABSTRACT ART IN MOTION** Their 2019 international tour kicked off in February with screenings and presentations in Canada and the United States. In March they are visiting Latin America. The Best of Punto y Raya Festival 2018 features the 18 finalist and award winning films. The festival is held in October at CeTA, an Audiovisual Technology Center in Wroclaw, Poland.

See clips of the winners at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1xi7t1BIDCEPp5u719MeOA>



**A NEW PADDINGTON SERIES IS COMING IN 2020** Studiocanal and David Heyman, who helped transform *Paddington* into an almost \$500 million smash, are teaming with Nickelodeon on a new CGI-animated *Paddington* series. Ben Whishaw has returned to voice the bear. The 3D series will follow the adventures of a younger Paddington bear. Each episode will open and close with Paddington's letters to Aunt Lucy as he tells her what he's learned about life through the day's new adventure. Nickelodeon is set to air the series on its networks worldwide.



Imagine for the Year of the Pig by Signe

Signe Baumann is working on *My Love Affair with Marriage*, 'an animated feature that infuses music and neuroscience into a personal story of love, gender and marriage. <http://www.signebaumann.com/kickstart>



'FAMILY GUY,' 'BOB'S BURGERS' RENEWED AT FOX

Fox's *Family Guy* (left) and *Bob's Burgers* will return in September for the 2019-2020 broadcast season so Fox's animation block will remain intact.



**MARVEL, HULU SET FOUR-SHOW ANIMATED SLATE** *MODOK*, *Hit-Money*, *Tigra & Dazzler* and *Howard the Duck* will culminate with a special, *The Offenders*.

**EMMA THOMPSON TURNS DOWN A ROLE IN A LASSETER FILM** She was asked, but went public saying she isn't interested in being part of Lasseter's new project. *Variety* asked her to elaborate but she declined to discuss the matter further except to confirm the story is true. There are conflicting reports that she may or may not have recorded some dialog for the film before John was hired.

**'THE LEGO MOVIE 2: THE SECOND PART'** It failed to click with audiences in a major way. It was expected to open with a \$50 million to \$55 million weekend in the US, but writers said it suffered from "franchise fatigue." It had fairly strong reviews, but the follow-up came in nearly 50 percent behind *The Lego Movie*, the 2014 box office sensation directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller. It was also well behind the \$53 million debut of the spinoff *The Lego Batman Movie* in February 2017. The only film in the series to fare worse was a second 2017 spinoff, *The Lego Ninjago Movie*, which opened to \$20.4 million in September 2017.

*Lego Movie 2* also struggled overseas, where it launched to \$18.2 million from 63 markets for a global bow of \$53.2 million. The pic was easily beat offshore by the

threequel *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*, which earned another \$38.2 million from 46 markets for an early foreign total of \$138.7 million. *How to Train Your Dragon 3* opened Feb. 22 in North America and it is presently about to become the top grossing film in the US for 2019.

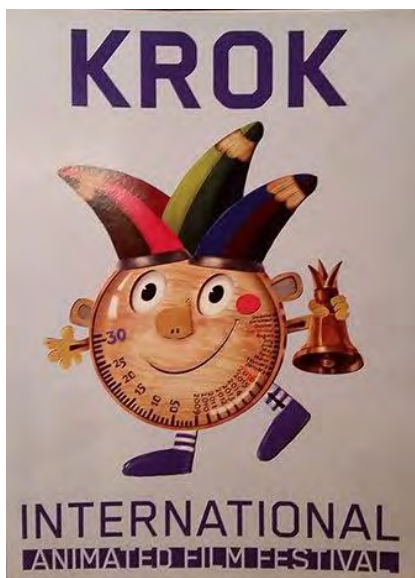
**RON MILLER, FORMER PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE WALT DISNEY CO., DIES AT 85** The son-in-law of Walt Disney, he oversaw the creation of Touchstone Pictures, the Disney Channel, and the studio releasing edgier films under his watch. As Disney president from 1978-83 and then CEO 1983-84, Miller pushed for more daring and mature films from the studio.

He and his wife Diane Disney Miller opened the Silverado Winery. They also created the wonderful Walt Disney Family Museum that opened 10 years ago. He was the president of the museum's board of directors. Diane, who died last year, was Walt Disney's oldest daughter.

He greenlit the pioneering computer animation movie *Tron* (1982) and Tim Burton's short films *Vincent* (1982) and *Frankenweenie* (1984). He acquired the rights to Gary K. Wolf's 1981 mystery novel *Who Censored Roger Rabbit?* That eventually became *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988).

Under his watch, Miller also produced the Disney classics *Freaky Friday* (1976), *Candlehoe* (1977) *Pete's Dragon* (1977), and *The Black Hole* (1979). He was executive producer on *Escape to Witch Mountain* (1975), *The Rescuers* (1977), *The Fox and the Hound* (1981) and *The Black Cauldron* (1985).

His 18-month tenure as CEO ended with his resignation after an unsuccessful takeover attempt of the company and criticism from investors and those perturbed by his vision. He was replaced by Michael Eisner and Frank Wells in a decision supported by Walt's nephew Roy E. Disney.



## KROK CELEBRATES A SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY, Sept. 30 – Oct. 8, 2018 Volga River, Russia by Nancy Denny-Phelps

KROK is a special festival for me and this year it was extra special because it was its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Such an auspicious occasion brought together many old friends and a flood of memories of KROK's past. It was time to remember friends, who in the words of Yuri Norshteyn, Honorary President of KROK, ". . . have already crossed the great river, looking at us from the other side".

Special programs were screened to take us down memory lane. *Grand Prix Winning Films of KROK* showcased films ranging from Elena Gavrylko's *The Girlfriend*, which won in 1991, to the top prize winner of 2016, Nina Gantz's *Edmond*. To add to the nostalgia, the name and country of each jury was listed in the catalog along with the name and country of the animator and a still from the film.

The "30, 50 ..." selection of films screened 5 classic Russian animations that were created 30, 40 and 50 years ago. Yefim Gamburg's 20-minute 1968 black and white film parodies spy and detective fiction clichés. *Film, Film, Film*, is Fyodor Khitruk's parody of the Soviet movie industry, where dealing with bureaucratic officials in the 1960s was a routine headache. Also from 1968, Boris Stepanov's *The Kid and Carlson* is based on a trilogy of children's books written by the noted Swedish author Astrid Lindgren. The stories are about a young boy who is very lonely. In need of a friend, he invents Carlson, a plump little man who lives on the roof.

The 1970s was represented by Vladimir Popov's 1978 animation *Three From Prostokvashino*. The main character is a boy whose parents will not let him keep a talking cat that he finds. Along with the cat and his dog, the boy sets off for Prostokvashino where they set up house and have many adventures. The 1988 film *We Are Women* by Elena Kasavina, Lyudmila Tkachikova and Sergei Kushnerov showcased the 1980's.

The Puppeteers Association of the Soyuzmultfilm Studio celebrated an anniversary, its 65<sup>th</sup>, in 2018. The history of Russian puppet animation began with the films of Vladislav Starevich, who immigrated to France following the Russia Revolution. In 1924 Alexandr Ptushko and his team breathed new life into puppet animation in the USSR, but unfortunately, their work was interrupted by World War II. Puppet animators were once again left to master their craft on their own.

In 1953 a new group was formed, the Puppeteers Association, and in 1956 it moved to a church in Staropesovsky Lane in the Old Arbat district of Moscow. Unfortunately the association was eventually forced to leave their home in the church about 10 years ago which resulted in a lapse of puppet animation at

Soyuzmultfilm Studio. With each passing year it seems less likely that they will ever get back together.

The anniversary program was full of wonderful films including one of my all-time favorites, *The Mitten* directed by Roman Kachanov in 1967. It is a sweet story about a little girl whose mother won't let her have a puppy, which she desperately wants. The girl goes out to play where we see all the other children are with their dogs. She begins to pretend that her mitten is a dog and her imagination turns her mitten into a knitted dog that comes to life. In the end, her mother finally realizes how much her daughter wants a dog and allows her to have one of the upstairs neighbor's puppies. The story is beautifully told and the puppets are charming.



Nancy with two of Russia's greatest animators, Alexander Petrov and Yuri Norstein (barefoot).

When people think of Yuri Norstein they think of *Hedgehog in the Fog*, certainly a great film, but don't overlook his beautiful *The Heron and the Crane*. Made in 1974 at Soyuzmultfilm, it is the story of two would-be lovers, a heron and a crane, whose pride and self-importance continually prevent them from accepting each other's marriage proposals despite the fact that they are in love with each other. The story is based on a Russian fairy tale that is a cautionary fable about pride.



This film is the first of several films that Yuri worked on with his artist wife Francesca Yarusova and cameraman Alexander Zhukovsky. Norstein's films are much more intricate than normal cut out animation. To achieve the effect the team was looking for in *The Heron and the Crane*, they built a special piece of equipment. It involved the use of multiple glass planes that can be moved in any direction away from or toward the camera which achieves a unique 3D look.

The centerpiece of the festival is the competition screenings. Originally KROK was open to both student and professional works every year. Several years ago it began to alternate, one year featuring student films and the next year professional works. In honor of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the 2018 edition of the festival included both student and professional animators.

Far too often students bite off more than they can chew, making films that are much too long that end up with a very weak finish, if they finish at all, because some go off on unnecessary tangents and run out of time to complete their film. What can be wonderful is when a student makes a long film and gets it all right. Jan Mika used cutout animation, puppets, 2D, real-time, and live action to make *We're Human, After All*, a 17 minute film. The film is the story of a hare who is facing another bleak winter of freezing cold, hunger, danger from hunters, and his arch-enemy the fox until he discovers what a good, comfortable, safe life rabbits lead in the cozy rabbit hutches. But is their life really so safe?

I particularly liked the music for the film by Viliam Beres. I couldn't find out any information about him but I assume that he was a student at the Film Academy of Miroslav Ondricek in the Czech Republic, where Mika made the film as his Masters Degree Graduation Film. *We're Human, After All* has won several awards at festivals. At KROK the film earned Jan the Best Graduation Film award along with four thousand euros.

Triet Le, a US-based Vietnamese animation student, took just three minutes to tell his satirical tale about abusive horn honking in Vietnam. The film depicts motorists in cars, on motorcycles, and bicycles using their voices to honk as they speed past each other. It results in some very funny consequences.

I am not used to seeing a 4-minute film by Priit and Olga Parn because their films usually have very complex plots that cannot fit in a short format. I was very curious about their four minute *The Eyeless Hunter, A Khanty Story*. The animation is immediately recognizable as Priit's characteristic style, but the story is based on a legend passed down through generations of the Khanty, an indigenous people living primarily in Siberia.

Eesti Joonis Film in Estonia commissioned several of their animators to create short animations based on legends from various parts of the Soviet Union. *The Eyeless Hunter* is a rather gruesome tale about a Khanty wife who is angry when her husband returns home from a day in the forest without any food. The next day she secretly follows him into the woods and when he falls asleep, she is incensed by his laziness and steals his eyes - then the rest of the legend unfolds. The story fits Priit and Olga's style perfectly.

Fellow Estonian Riho Unt who works with Nukufilm is one of the most versatile people in the animation world. He is a graphic artist, author, and caricaturist as well as an extremely talented multi award-winning animation director. His films

range from the brilliant and disturbing *The Master*, which won the Jury Award Crystal at Annecy in 2015, to the delightfully humorous *Brothers Bearheart* which is my all-time favorite animated film. Taking time out from his own short film work, he was one of the directors of Kasper Jancis' delightful feature film *Captain Morton and the Spider Queen*. His follow-up film to *The Master* is *Mary and the 7 Dwarfs* which is in a totally different vein. Sister Mary has spent her entire life behind convent walls. Now elderly and very proper, the mechanically inclined nun has decided to fulfill her childhood dream. The only problem is her fragmented, almost non-existent memory. Sister Mary is afraid that her ultimate dream might turn out to be a sin instead. As always with Riho and Nukufilm's work, the puppets are perfect works of art. The film may not be as intense and powerful as *The Master* but it speaks to anyone who has an unfulfilled dream (and that is just about everyone).

This year's International Jury was headed by the renowned Swiss animator George Schwizgebel. The other members were Aleksandr Bubnov from the Ukraine/Bulgaria, Dmitry Geller of Russia, Ru Kuwahata who was born in Japan but now lives in the United States, and Jakob Schuh from Germany. Each jury member presented a retrospective of their work. George Schwizgebel gave a particularly interesting presentation entitled *My Way of Making Animated Films* where he not only screened his films but talked about the involved process and technique of painting on glass that he uses.

Each day there were "Coffee Breaks with the Directors" where directors of films that had recently been shown were asked questions by different members of the KROK staff and had an opportunity to talk about their film in depth.



The Konstantin Simonov

Our boat, the Konstantin Simonov, was home to animators from around the world for 8 days so you had the opportunity to really get to know your shipmates. This year we sailed from Moscow to Kazan on the Volga with stops along the way where we had time to explore the different cities. Kazan is the capitol of the Republic of Tatarstan, a semi-autonomous region of Russia and center of Tatar culture. There are always some children aboard as well as a few dogs; one year someone even brought her cat. There is a daily workshop for the children on board the ship where they learn about animation, try out different basic techniques and produce a short film which is screened at the closing ceremony.

Of course, KROK is not just about watching film. There is plenty of time for fun. After the opening ceremony, which was held at the House of Cinema in Moscow, there was a sumptuous banquet aboard ship. One thing that we all love to do at KROK is entertain each other so on many nights the "Re-Animation Club" convened after the last screening. At the club, held in the top deck room, which is also the screening room, people sang solo or in groups, told stories, and showed off whatever special talent they had.



The big event is Car-ni-val! When you see small groups of people huddled together that suddenly stop talking when you get near you know that they are working on their top secret carnival skit. This year our group updated Alexi Alexeev's very funny *KJFG No. 5* into *KJFG No. 25*. The 3 aging musicians, the rabbit, the bear, and the wolf are still trying to become rock stars, the hunter is as oblivious to everything as ever, and his faithful dog is still plodding along with him.

In our version my dear friend Suresh Eriyat, director at his Studio Eeksaurus in Mumbai made the perfect tree thumping bass player. His lovely producer wife Nilima Eriyat was an adorable rabbit thumping away on her tree stump, and I howled away as the wolf. Noted Indian composer Rajat Dholakia made a great absentminded hunter and director Elene Sebisveradze from Tbilisi, Georgia did a marvelous job as the long-suffering dog. Our cast was rounded out by Elene's sister Salome Sebisveradze and Nik portraying trees. We tied for first place and received a bag full of delicious goodies including caviar and a bottle of vodka that was consumed immediately.

In honor of KROK's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we all received a Russian sailor's blue and white striped shirt with KROK embroidered on the pocket. The shirt is a lasting memory of all of my years sailing on the KROK boat.



Most late nights after Re-Animation was over, Nik and Belarus animator/musician and dear friend Mikhail Tumelya played music together. Mikhail is a very talented director and he is also a super Balalaika player. Quite often the pair are joined by other animator/players for a lovely journey into the night.

The 8 days of KROK always fly by and all too soon it was time for the closing ceremony which was held in Kazan at the Moskovsky Cultural Center. The jury announced their decisions and the KROK bells and diplomas were handed out.

The Grand Prix bell went to Russian animator Svetlana Filippova for *Mitya's Love*. The beautifully drawn 13' film is based on a short story by Boris Schergin.

The young shipwright Mitya sets out to go to the cinema. Along the way, he sees a beautiful stranger. He falls in love with her the moment he sees her but she disappears. He has to find the girl but he doesn't know her name or address. He decides to go all over the city in search of her. The film utilizes images by Russian avant-garde artists Mikhail Larionov and Natalia Goncharova and the masters of naive art Pavel Leonov and Lyubov Maikova as Mitya searches throughout the city for the young lady.

Svetlana's 2014 film *Brutus* is a film that I am very fond of and *Mitya's Love* is just as beautifully drawn and animated. The film definitely deserves more than one viewing to catch all of the tiny details. A full list of all of the winning films is at the end of this article.

David Cherkasskiy and Eduard Nazarov will always be the Presidents of the festival but with the sad passing of David and Eduard, Yuri Norstein has become the Honorary President of the KROK Festival. A big thank you goes to Irina Kaplichnaya and her hard-working staff for keeping the KROK boat afloat. I am already looking forward to the 2019 edition of KROK which will actually be the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition. How is that possible if this was the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary? Simple, the first few years of KROK were held every other year so next year we have another milestone to celebrate.

Learn more about KROK and how to submit your film at: [krokkfestival.com](http://krokkfestival.com)



## ANIMARKT STOP MOTION FORUM, LODZ, POLAND

Oct. 8- 13, 2018, by Nancy Denny-Phelps

Lodz, Poland is known as the city of film. The first post-WWII animated film, Zenon Wasilewski's *In the Time of King Krakus*, was made in Lodz in 1947. 1948 saw the founding of the Lodz Film School and in 1956 the multiple Oscar-winning stop-motion Se-ma-for studio was opened. Now that Se-ma-for Studio is defunct, ANIMARKT is carrying on the city's stop-motion tradition.

Animarkt is a 6-day event designed as a forum for people involved in all branches of stop-motion to meet and exchange ideas. The Forum is divided into 3 different segments: Animarkt Presentations, Workshops, and the Pitching Session. I am involved as the Pitching Coach.

Before meeting with me each filmmaker received a session with script consultant Wim Vanacker. Wim is head of the script department and project manager of the European Short Pitch Project, a media service. He is also the founder of Sireal Films, a Brussels based production company.

It isn't enough just to have a good idea, you have to be able to pitch it well to prospective producers and distributors. To that end, each of the 15 animators and/or producers presenting a project received a private 55 minute one on one consultation with me. After listening to their presentations I gave them advice on how to improve their pitches. Pitching a project is a very individual thing. Some people just needed a bit of reassurance while others needed a lot of advice usually ending

with me saying "Now you should go back to your hotel and rewrite your presentation".

The fact that the films pitched were all stop-motion was the only thing that they had in common. Stories ranged from children's animation to very adult themes. Marnik Loysen is a United Kingdom animator who has worked at Aardman on their last 2 feature films. His 8-minute project *Prime Cuts* introduced us to vegan detective Hopkins and the alluring Alibi. Vegan Hopkins finds himself wrapped up in a salami based murder mystery. Based on his love of 1940's film noir, Marnik's film milks this classic film genre for all it's worth while giving it a modern twist.

The puppets that Marnik showed us as part of his presentation were beautifully crafted as one would expect from someone who has worked at Aardman. The pitch was humorous and to the point. Marnik received an Ale Kino + Special Award. The Ale Kino + award guarantees the purchase of the film upon completion by Ale Kino +, a Polish television channel owned and operated by Canal +. *Prime Cuts* was also awarded the DitoGear Award of a 50% discount for the purchase of DitoGear or if the film is made in Poland the 50% discount on the purchase price or free rental of the equipment.

*Crab* was a standout project for me. Polish animator Piotr Chmielewski takes us into the world of a crab who has a lucky escape. The sinking of the ship Britannic was a great catastrophe for most of the passengers. There was one creature, however, who thought of it as a miracle. A crab in the ship's kitchen was about to be plunged into a pot of boiling water until he suddenly found himself back on the ocean floor.

Piotr's crab puppet, which he passed around the audience, was a delightful character. The artwork that was presented looked excellent and the story is delightfully quirky and original. *Crab* won top honors at the Visegrad Animation Forum (now the CEE Animation Forum) in Trebon, Czech Republic so I was not surprised that the jury awarded him the Dragonframe 4 license and keypad as well as an Ale Kino + prize at Animarkt.

Brazilian Cynthia Levitan currently lives in Porto, Portugal. Her project, *Forbidden Love*, tackles a very serious subject, not usually dealt with in stop-motion, with sympathy and understanding. Her transgender puppet, Pierre, is living between 2 worlds, his male birth self and the woman hidden inside him. Between drinks and cigarettes, Pierre finally allows himself to discover Pietra, his beloved female self. In love, the two parts of one body live out the conflict of 2 souls inhabiting the same body and 2 bodies sharing the same home.

Cynthia brought the star of her film to demonstrate how quickly Pierre can be transformed into Pietra. Pietra's wig and dress are lovely down to the tiniest detail. She also demonstrated a number of exchangeable faces that she has created to give her character a wide range of expressions.

Cynthia's pitch was well thought out and to the point. She was also able to explain her motivation in making a film about a transgender person. Her presentation earned her 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the pitching forum, the Audiovisual Technology Center contribution of in-kind services in the amount of 40 000 PLN. The Audio Visual Technology Center is where *Loving Vincent* was shot along with many other noted animated and live action films so the prize is well worth winning.

During the coaching sessions, I tell the animators to be sure and say what specifically they are looking for, besides



winning of course. Cynthia took my advice to heart and told the audience that she was looking for a co-producer to work with her Lithuanian producer and a scriptwriter. After the pitching session, she received offers from both a scriptwriter and producer interested in working with her.

Mexican animator Jennifer Skarbnik Lopez and her Polish producer Ela Chrzanowska told us about Jennifer's personal connection to her film *See You Soon*. The proposed 10-minute film is inspired by an actual letter her grandfather Ruwen wrote from Mexico to his sister Haneczka who lived in Poland at the end of World War II. He had escaped Poland during the war but his sister had chosen to remain. All that she had to remember him by was a button that fell off his coat when they were saying goodbye at the train station. She thought that she would never see her brother again until a letter arrived ending with *See You Soon*.

Jennifer and Ela have put together a very clever promo package for their film. Inside an envelope with actual antique Mexican stamps on it are postcards containing such information about the film as a one-sentence synopsis of the story, financial statistics, concept art and portraits of their two main characters. Attached to the back of the envelope is a small package with Haneczka's name and concentration camp number and inside is a handmade button. *See You Soon* received a Special Mention from the jury. I was quite taken by this project and look forward to seeing the finished film.

Estonian Riho Unt's new film *The Wings*, presented by his producer Kerdi Kuusik-Oengo, did not receive an award but there is no doubt in my mind that the film will be completed. Riho is a highly respected animator, winning a Jury Crystal at Annecy for his intense stop-motion film *The Master*. His latest project *The Wings* is a 16-minute film set in the early 1900s. It is based on correspondence between a character from a book, inventor Jaan Tatikas, and the famous Italian artist and inventor Leonardo da Vinci's spirit. Both men dreamed of giving men wings to fly. The story is by the Estonian writer Eduard Bornhohe,

Along with a delightful story, the artwork looks lovely and the character designs are charming. *The Wings* has already been funded by the Estonian Film Institute. Kerdi was at Animarkt looking for a co-production partner for post-production. I am sure she will not have any trouble finding one.

Top honors at Animarkt went to Warsaw director and producer Michal Lubinki for his 15 to 20-minute project *Astra*. The film is the story of a six-year-old girl trying to prevent her older sister Anna from going off into space, which is a metaphor for a life-threatening illness that Anna has. Anna goes on her mission but her sister Astra comes to her rescue. The story is composed of 2 interlacing moments in the sister's lives that are combined in a nonlinear fashion.

Michael's goal at the pitching forum was to find a professional studio with professional equipment and support. He certainly achieved that winning the top prize from the Audiovisual Technology Center in-kind in the amount of 60,000 PLN which is approximately 14,000 Euros. In awarding first prize to *Astra* the jury said "The story has a lot of heart. The pitch was excellent, very complete and well organized. Character design was nicely presented and researched. Fantastic execution". This year's jury was composed of Jean Thoren, owner/publisher of *Animation Magazine*; co-founder of Ikki Films and producer Edwina

Liard; and stop-motion animation specialist at the Audiovisual Technology Center Jacek Spychalski.

Workshops are an integral part of Animarkt. Master stop-motion animator Tim Allen's workshop had a long list of applicants for the six places in his Character Animation workshop. Each applicant was asked to send in a film representing their work. Tim then selected the 6 participants and designed a series of individual exercises for each participant according to the animator's skills and needs. The 3-day workshop covered over 21 hours of hard work. Don't let Tim's boyish looks fool you. He has over 18 years of experience working on such films as *Corpse Bride*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, and the latest Wes Anderson film *Isle of Dogs* so he really knows his stuff.

Ben Tesseur and Steven De Beul have built their Mechelen, Belgium based Beast Studio from the ground floor up. Now Beast is the place to go for development, financing, and production or co-production for stop-motion animation. They have been involved in such prestigious projects as *This Magnificent Cake*, *Oh Willy*, *Panique au Village (Panic in the Village)* and the television series *Rinje*.

At their Animarkt workshop, Directing Stop-Motion Animation with Beast Studio, Ben and Steven gave insights into how they work. The participants were also given assignments to help them learn what details they should pay attention to in every part of an actual production.

Barcelona based scriptwriter, content consultant, and story editor Carlos Bleycher is well qualified to lead the Character Development and Storytelling workshop. Carlos has written original content for animated series that have been broadcast on major networks such as Disney xD, Cartoon Network LA, and Discovery Kids. He was also head of story and script for the stop-motion series *Puerto Papel (Paper Port)* broadcast in 9 countries.

Participants in his workshop learned with theoretical and practical examples how to develop characters that fit organically into their stories and give the key points to the structure of their episodes from the springboard to the actual scripts.

Along with the hands-on workshops, the Master Classes were invaluable sources of information. Alvaro Ceppi, creative director, producer, and partner in Zumbastico Studio in Santiago, Chili, introduced the audience to his unique television series *Puerto Papel (Paper Port)*. The plotline centers on Mathilde, a 12-year-old girl, who wakes up every morning with a new superpower. She loses the power at the end of every day, but the next day brings a new power and new adventures.

What makes this project so interesting and unique is that it is a hybrid papercraft 2D television series. The sets are paper or cardboard based. The characters appear to be made out of paper, but actually start out with a cut-able plastic base to ensure that they are rigid and then covered with printed paper. The television show is already in its second season and Zumbastico Studio is in pre-production on a feature-length *Paper Port* movie which will star Mathilde and her friends. Alvaro took the audience through the entire process of creating an episode from concept – story development to final production. I found it to be a very complex and interesting process.

Angela Poschet is one of the most organized people I have ever met and she has to be. She is an award-winning Line

Producer, Production Supervisor, Manager, and Consultant for animation productions. Her screen credits are too numerous to mention, but her latest gig was Production Supervisor on *Isle of Dogs*.

Angela's Master Class was titled *How to Plan and Schedule a Stop-Motion Production to Not Lose Money and Do It Successfully*. She used her work on *Isle of Dogs* to give her audience a behind-the-scenes look at the film from the Production Supervisor's point of view. For anyone interested in going into the production end of animation, Angela's tips about involvement and responsibility, from planning to monitoring the shooting timeline and the set to the puppet fabrication process, during the entire production was invaluable. Even if you were planning on making a short animated film rather than a feature, Angela's advice was well worth heeding.

Anyone involved in puppet animation knows Barry JC Purves. The British master of stop-motion puppet animation, Barry has won numerous honors including BAFTA and Oscar nominations in his 40-year career. He has worked on such classic British television series as *Wind in the Willows* and *Twirlywoos*, I but I think that he is best known for his own award-winning, darker adult short films such as *Rigoletto*, *Achilles*, *Plume*, and *Tchaikovsky*. My personal favorite of all of his films is *Gilbert and Sullivan – The Very Models* which was shortlisted for the Oscars in 1999.

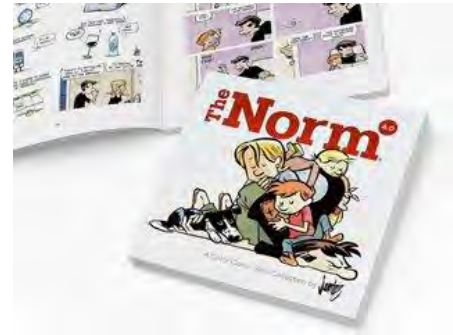
Barry is a most entertaining speaker. Listening to Animation - A Celebration of Artifice, his Master Class topic, you could not help but be caught up in Barry's enthusiasm and love of just not animation but all art forms. Using numerous slides to demonstrate his points, Barry defined what animation is and how an awareness of the techniques, tricks and processes are all part of the enjoyment of animation. He went on to connect up how the awareness is interconnected and shared by other art forms such as theatre, opera, and dance. I walked out of Barry's class feeling inspired with a whole new way of looking at all forms of art.

Even with its very busy schedule, Animarkt made time for socializing and networking. Following the opening ceremony at the lovely Szpulka Cinema there was a banquet and on the following night a networking dinner. Following the closing awards ceremony where we learned which pitched film had been given the prize. On the last day of the forum, participants could schedule one-on-one meetings with any of the guests.

My sincerest thanks go to Agnieszka Kowalewska-Skowron who was in charge of the pitching sessions and Pauline Zacharek, logistics manager for inviting me to act as pitching coach for the second year. It is a job that I look forward to with great pleasure.

If you have a puppet animation project in development I wholeheartedly encourage you to apply to Animarkt pitching. If you are involved in stop motion animation or want to learn more about this special art form a visit to Animarket for the Master Classes and presentations will be invaluable to you. You can find out more about Animarkt 2018 and how to become a part of the 2019 program at: [www.animarkt.pl](http://www.animarkt.pl)

My next stop on my whirl windfall of 2018 animation tour was the festival in Thessaloniki, Greece where I had a fabulous time and met so many wonderful, generous people involved in the animation community there. My next article will be about my Greek adventure.



Help fund a new color collection of Michael Jantze's *The Norm 4.0* comic strip. *The Norm* comic strip is about the boy who did grow up! This 176-page book is ready to go to press as a paperback, the stretch goals will make the book even more collectible as well as add benefits for contributors to all levels with shipping. <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-norm-4-0-comic-collection#/>



### JUST ANOTHER WEIRD AND COLORFUL GOUACHE PAINTING BY SALLY CRUIKSHANK

A copy of Sally's *Quasi at the Quackadero* is in the Library Congress collection of important American films. She has an online shop selling DVDs of her delightful creations and a great deal of other things. Now she also is selling paintings. <https://www.etsy.com/shop/funonmars?fbclid=IwAR1YWqxIG7r4FUgrO1xe3edDpdw9BXkH3M9Qq4Q988VZwtBq-DcQJCPa0M>

### DISCOVER THE WORK OF ANIMATOR GEORGE GRIFFIN

The Museum of Modern Art (NYC) has funded the restoration of some of his films. Some are now available in high definition digital and have been screened in NYC. George also has an extensive number of his works on line.

### AN ARTICLE OF POSSIBLE INTEREST

In *Disney's Golden Age, a Modernist Pioneer Designed the Perfect Animator's Desk* by Ben Marks. It discusses the different desks designed for the new Disney Studio in the late 1930s that were designed by Ben Weber. The article is by David Bossert who worked at the studio. <https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/disney-animator-desk/>

**A NEW SCOOPY DOO ANIMATED FEATURE IS PLANNED** Veteran voice actor Frank Welker will voice Scooby in the untitled *Scooby-Doo* movie being made by Warner Bros. and its Warner Animation Group division. Tony Cervone is directing.

**COMING MARCH 21-24, THE GLAS ANIMATION FESTIVAL IN BERKLEY**

ASIFA-SF will email details to members as soon as we get them. Just before sending out this newsletter we were told, "Karl! We'll be sending out the schedule next week so we'll send it to you then. Thanks again for your support."

At Landmark's Cinemas, 2230 Shattuck Ave.

<https://glasanimation.com>

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

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