

MARCH 2024

FORMER NFB ANIMATION PRODUCER MARCY PAGE HONORED WITH ASIFA-HOLLYWOOD'S WINSOR MCCAY AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT



Marcy Page was honored for her “unparalleled achievement and exceptional contributions to animation.” The award was presented February 17, 2024, at the 51st Annie Awards by ASIFA-Hollywood, the Los Angeles branch of the International Animated Film Association.

Marcy was born and raised in California. After she graduated from San Francisco State, she taught there and worked at Colossal Pictures. She immigrated to Canada after she met the man she married. She joined the NFB in 1990, first as a director and associate producer and then as a producer.

She sought out eclectic and unusual productions and co-productions during her career as a producer with the NFB’s English Program Animation Studio, pushing the boundaries of

the animation medium. Her NFB credits include two Academy Award-winning animated shorts, Chris Landreth's *Ryan* (2004) and Torill Kove's *The Danish Poet* (2006). She was also NFB producer on four more Oscar-nominated films: Kove's *My Grandmother Ironed the Kings Shirts* (1999) and *Me and Moulon* (2014); Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski's *Madame Tutli-Putli* (2007); and Amanda Forbis and Wendy Tilby's *Wild Life* (2011).



EXCELLENT STOP-MOTION FESTIVAL IN SAN JOSE

Sat. March 2, 5 PM, *The Inventor* with director Jim Capobianco doing a Q & A.

Sunday, March 3, 2pm, A Selection of Short Films (Screening), 3:45 – Panel discussion “The New Landscape for Creators” and 5pm, Kangmin Kim Retrospective + Q&A with director.

At The Hammer Theater. 101 Paseo de San Antonio, San Jose, CA 95113 408-924-8501

Public invited. Details www.InventionInMotion.org and www.hammertheatre.com



(From L-R) Frank and Caroline Mouris’ Oscar-winning ‘Frank Film,’ Jan Svankmajer’s ‘Dimensions of Dialogue,’ and Norman McLaren’s Oscar-winning ‘Neighbors.’

COMMENTS ABOUT KARL COHEN’S [AWN.COM](http://www.AWN.COM) ARTICE “HELP! I LOVE WATCHING ANIMATED SHORTS” I was pleased that several people took the time to say they appreciated it. Most were short comments like David Chai, who teaches animation at San Jose State, writing, “WOW! This is a great article! I’m looking forward to the next two!” A few were longer, meaningful statements like Shirley Smith, who studied animation at SF State. She wrote, “I love this article. It traces the fantastic journey that independent animations and animators made in my life. It was a dense string of a huge variety of events that were unique,

profound and funny, and so very inspiring. When I invited my friends, they got so excited to see this kind of thing. Karl and Carol love these unique shows, and just ache for more. I hope Ron Diamond can get some momentum going again. I know in my heart that people can get addicted to this kind of stuff. I've seen it happen. My favorite films were always done by independents. They are so much more authentic. “

A very useful note came from John Hays, a former Colossal director and co-founder of Wild Brain. He pointed out a show I will add if this article is reprinted. He wrote “Excellent essay, Karl! First time I’ve seen the complex history of animated shorts put together in one place and you’re definitely the right guy to do it. Great way to stimulate discussion on a worthy subject.”

“One thing you might consider adding to the mix is MTV’s & (C)P’s *Liquid Television*. The episodic show was a pretty good effort at bringing animated shorts to the mainstream. Also proved to be a good launching platform for potential series pilots. Worked well for *Aeon Flux* and *Beavis and Butthead* at least.”

The article is posted at <https://www.awn.com/animationworld/help-i-love-watching-animated-shorts>



ANIMATION MENTOR STUDENT SHOWCASE 2023

Animation Mentor is an online animation school that teaches students character animation skills. Headquartered in Emeryville, California, the school offers a 6 core animation courses in addition to Creatures and Maya Workshops where students are taught by mentors, experienced animators who are professionals working in the animation industry. Animation Mentor is a distance learning school at which animation professionals teach character animation to students in over 105 countries

https://www.animationmentor.com/blog/animation-mentor-student-showcase-2023/?utm_source=cartbrew&utm_medium=paid&utm_campaign=blog-cap&utm_content=showcase23



The end of the line at Auschwitz
DISCOVER THE POWER OF SERIOUS ANIMATION
RARELY SEEN FILMS ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST
By Karl F. Cohen

A friend recently sent me information about a book on an animation subject I knew nothing about, animated holocaust films. I wondered what the films were discussed in *Holocaust Representations in Animated Documentaries* by Liat Ateir-Livny. I couldn't find much information about the book's content online so I wrote several scholars and asked if they were familiar with the book or the films it might discuss. Only one person was able to help. Tsvika Oren, who teaches animation in Israel. He sent me a short list. Since then I've found a few other works on the subject. Fortunately, many of the shorts can be seen on the internet and trailers are posted online for the features. I only discuss shorts in English or ones with English subtitles.

Some people who survived the Holocaust are now

willing to share their painful memories, but for decades most preferred not to discuss their painful past. I remember a cousin once asking our grandmother what life was like in Europe before she came to America. All she replied was life was awful, why talk about that? I never heard my grandparents discuss what happened to their Jewish relatives and friends who didn't leave Europe. My mother said it was too painful and depressing for her father to talk about that subject.

Today there is a growing interest in revealing some of those horrors from the past, "least we forget." We don't want history to repeat itself, but there are antisemitic people who deny that it happened. Time is running out for those who survived the Holocaust to speak out.

At first nobody spoke out. The oldest films in this study are two films by a Holocaust survivor, a three minute abstract experimental short from 1958 and a feature made in 1982. The abstract film has no dialog. The only other examples from the Twentieth Century were a feature from 1995 and a short from 1898. In this century I found the next oldest film dated from 2010. To show the growth of interest in the topic, 11 of the 23 films discussed were released in 2021-2023.

Some of the animators who addressed the topic had strong personal reasons to explore this unpleasant subject. Their feelings about the topic seems to have inspired them to be really focused on creating meaningful works that are educational and not unpleasant to watch. I discovered

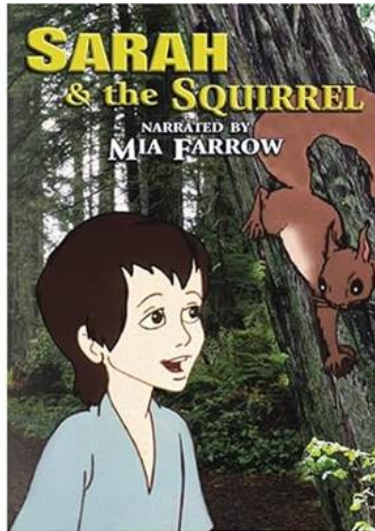
impressive, well thought out works that show victims surviving and rising above adversity. While the Holocaust is a depressing topic, dealing with it one victim at a time and showing their struggle to survive introduces the element of hope.

Using animation can somewhat remove the viewer from feeling too empathetic towards the pain and suffering of the characters in the film. Had these film been made with actors, certain sequences might be too uncomfortable to watch. Animation can distance us from some of that discomfort.

Obviously, there is an audience who wants to discover the truth about our pasts, even though some events are upsetting. The show *Finding Your Roots* on Public Television has become one of the networks most popular primetime shows. They research who the long-forgotten ancestors of the guests on the show were. Guests are interested in learning their family's history even though some of the facts are painful to hear. Unless you are Native American you, or your parents or other older ancestors were once immigrants. In many cases they came to escape famine, extreme poverty, pogroms or to be sold into slavery. For many of the Jewish guests on the show it is all too common to hear the host Henry Lewis Gates Jr. inform them of relatives they had never heard of who were among the millions who perished in Hitler's death camps. If you are Native American your ancestors were probably once hunted by soldiers or white settlers who either stole your land and/or forced them into migrating to reservations.

THE FILMS

WE SHALL NEVER DIE. 1958. Yoram Gross. 3:18 min.
An abstract, experimental film that might refer to the
holocaust. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=Eyoyn3hYRzA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eyoyn3hYRzA)



**‘SARAH,’ AKA ‘SARAH AND THE SQUIRREL’ AND
‘THE SEVENTH MATCH,’** 1982. Yoram Gross, Australia.
(a feature of various lengths depending on the version you
see) This is a low budget production and probably a labor of
love that never receive the distribution Gross must have hoped
for. Gross was a Polish Jew and during WWII his family was
on Oskar Schindler’s list; however, they chose to escape from
being caught by moving several times from one hiding place
to another. Mia Farrow provides the voice of the girl.

The trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=5C_6Qs340RY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C_6Qs340RY)

The full the feature: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhFFk1zHW8E>

The film is about young Sarah who lives alone in a forest after her family is captured and taken to a concentration camp. She witnesses a group of Polish resistance fighters trying to blow up a railroad bridge, but they are captured. She decides to destroy the bridge, even though she lacked the tools to do it. To pad out the story Gross added some Disney touches such as her becoming friends with several animals of the forest and there is a great fire that might have been inspired by *Bambi*.

THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK, 1995, directed by Akinori Nagaoka, made for a juvenile audience, won an award at the Chicago International Childrens' Festival, the trailer and complete feature are on Youtube.

SILENCE, 1998. Film by Sylvie Bringas and Orly Yadin. 10:28 min. A Holocaust story inspired by the life of Tana Ross. Her mother was taken to Auschwitz in 1942 and she never saw her again. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQcfJUyo1R4>

OVERNIGHT STAY (ÜBERNACHTUNG) 2009. Daniela Sherer. USC. 8:26. A woman recalls her memories of the holocaust, Trailer <http://www.vimeo.com/13620372>

I WAS A CHILD OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS. 2010.

Ann Marie Fleming, 15 min. Produced by the National Film Board of Canada. https://www.nfb.ca/film/i_was_a_child_of_holocaust_survivors



SEVEN MINUTES IN THE WARSAW GHETTO John Oettinger, 2012, 8 min. This stop-motion puppet film is set in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942. The dark gothic tones symbolize the brevity and suffering of a boy by the cracked skin of the puppet. He is in the middle of the brutal world of the Holocaust. Based on an actual event, it is quite different than most Holocaust films as it does not offer a feeling of relief at the end.

In the film the boy peeks through a hole in the ghetto wall and sees a carrot lying on the sidewalk just on the other side. He tries to pull the carrot through the hole, unaware that two SS men are following his every move.

Seven Minutes in the Warsaw Ghetto received a Special Mention at the Annecy Film Festival and has won other awards. It was shown by more than 120 international film festivals including: Palm Springs, Edinburgh, Dubai, Hiroshima and the London Animation Film Festival.

Clip at <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/35176/124043832> (full short can be rented for \$2).



CHILDREN OF THE HOLOCAUST “RUTH”. 2014.

BBC. Zane Whittingham. 6:23. UK. Cutout animation. Shown at Ancey. The animated short is no longer available online.

AUFSEHERIN. 2016. Wilbert van Veldhuizen. 5:30. Based on a true story about a young woman in the Dutch resistance who is arrested by the Nazi police in 1944. [https://](https://vimeo.com/193062408?utm_campaign=5250933&utm_source=affiliate&utm_channel=affiliate&cjevent=44ff7d16c65d11ee8147bc950a1cb828&clickid=44ff7d16c65d11ee8147bc950a1cb828)

vimeo.com/193062408?utm_campaign=5250933&utm_source=affiliate&utm_channel=affiliate&cjevent=44ff7d16c65d11ee8147bc950a1cb828&clickid=44ff7d16c65d11ee8147bc950a1cb828

STRINGS, 2017, Erin Morris, Falmouth University, UK. 3 min. Inspired by the work of Amnon Weinstein who restores violins from the Holocaust so that they can be played as a

symbol of hope. A handsome work of art with curved lines that flow to the music. The images formed by the lines are visual symbols that the viewer is left to interpret. Some images suggest buildings of the concentration camps, a few might refer to violin strings breaking, or are they a reference to violence or death? Animated mainly on ones in TV Paint.
<https://vimeo.com/220114594>

NUMBER ON GREAT-GRANDPA'S ARM (THE), 2017, Amy Schatz. Holocaust History – HBO. Opening footage sequence 1 min. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VntlYm0u7B0>



LA STELLA DI ANDRA E TATI, 2018. Rosalba Vitellaro and Alessandro Belli. Art Dir. Annalisa Corsi. A very

attractive trailer in color is online, 1:45 min. Story of an Italian child. 28'28" <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=La+Stella+di+Andra+e+Tati.+2018#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:7580dbda,vid:KGQjics4fYU,s t:0>

A longer promo in Italian, more clips and people talking about the film. <https://www.raiplay.it/video/2018/05/La-stella-di-Andra-e-Tati---13052018-d05a326f-b0fc-4f58-9fd3-24d9fbd18148.html>



WHERE IS ANNE FRANK, Ari Folman. Belgium, 2021, 99 min. Kitty, the imaginary girl that Anne wrote to in her diary, seeks out the deceased Anne which results in her inspiring a wave of modern social justice for refugees. “Folman uses a well-known story from a fresh angle while powerfully placing it in the context of the horrific tragedy that surrounds it” (from IMDB). *Variety* said, The *Waltz With Bashir* (2008) director examines the Jewish author's legacy, speculating on how she might feel about the mistreatment of refugees in Europe

today.” Previewed at the Cannes Film Festival. [https://
www.imdb.com/title/tt3454424/](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3454424/)

VOICES IN THE VOID, 2021, 18 min. As a teenager, Rabbi Bent Melchior went into hiding with his family to escape Nazi deportation. In his own words, he tells a story of heroism and survival, and of the regular Danish people who took exceptional steps to save their neighbors. [https://
www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZy1U2zvbec](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZy1U2zvbec)

CHARLOTTE. 2021. Tahir Rana, Éric Warin. 92 min.
France, Canada. An independently produced biography of German-Jewish artist Charlotte Salomon (1917-1943) who was killed in Auschwitz. Trailer [https://
www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2vvxfqi_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2vvxfqi_o)

TWO TREES IN JERUSALEM 2022, 27 min. An animated documentary produced by Humanity in Action, profiles the remarkable history of Eberhard and Donata Helmrich, who together saved the lives of countless

Jews during the Holocaust. Trailer [https://
www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ3Npe6T_Sw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQ3Npe6T_Sw)
Use you search to see the full short.

HOLY HOLOCAUST. 2022. Osi Wald and Noa Berman-Herzberg. 17 min. It is an unusual art experience, a conversation between two women who are close friends. The artwork is quite stylized and the conversation seems carefully structured rather than improvised. Towards the end of the

long discussion, it shifts to what might be factual or a dream that relates to Nazi Germany. <https://www.newyorker.com/video/watch/the-new-yorker-documentary-holy-holocaust-family-history-stands-between-two-friends>



LETTER TO A PIG, 2022. Tal Kantor. Israel, 16 min. A Holocaust survivor reads a letter he wrote to the pig who saved his life. A young schoolgirl hears his testimony in class and sinks into a surreal daydream where she confronts questions of identity, collective trauma, and the extremes of human nature. Oscar and Annie nominations. 2024. Trailer <https://www.shortoftheweek.com/2024/01/04/letter-to-a-pig/> 1.24

The Making of *LETTER TO A PIG* – Parts 1 – 3 1 (5:19) <https://vimeo.com/881360309> Part 2 The Technique! (4:53) <https://vimeo.com/881366964> and part 3 The characters (4:47) <https://vimeo.com/881367298>



THE TEDDY BEAR, Benjamine Gruen, 2022, 12 min. The true story of Michael Gruenbaum, survivor of Terezin Concentration Camp. The film is narrated by Michael Gruenbaum, who survived two-and-a-half years in Terezin as a child. It is a biographic statement and includes how a homemade stuffed toy saved his life. The film is described as appropriate for middle school age children and older. The film was made by Michael's grandson who went to the Rhode Island School of Design. <https://www.lappinfoundation.org/mission/>

THE HOLOCAUST DEATH TRAIN, 2022, 6 min. the "Death Trains" were used to transport innocent Jewish families to the concentration camps. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Be8T8izLcyI>

MY FATHER'S SECRETS, 2023, directed by Véra Belmont, France, Belgium, 74 minutes. "A heartrending yet deeply uplifting tale of remembrance, love and the triumph of the human spirit." *My Father's Secrets* is an intimate, thought-provoking film that focuses on a family's journey to reconciliation after facing the trauma of the Holocaust. At 20

years old, Michel's father returned to his native Belgium, marrying and fathering four children. The story is the family's journey to understand their father's past as they grow up. A deeply uplifting tale of remembrance, love and the triumph of the human spirit. Featuring the voices of Elliott Gould and others. Based on the autobiographical novel by author/cartoonist Michel Kichka. 74 min. Trailer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yzLBR_wjR4



HUMO, 2023, directed by Rita Basulyo, Mexico, puppets. A somber emotionally moving work of art about an innocent young boy in a concentration where nobody in his world comes back. Film is dedicated "to our lost children." It is an adaptation of the illustrated children's book *Humo* by Antón Fortes. It was nominated for an Annie award for best short and made the short list of animate shorts nominated for an Oscar. Trailer at <https://www.animationmagazine.net/2023/08/humo-wins-oscar-qualifying-hollyshorts-award/>

BAMISTARIM. 2023. Tamar Dadon-Raveh. 8 min. Two young Jewish girls talking on board a ship bound for Israel about their life during WWII. English sub-titles. <https://>

vimeo.com/818180903

FINAL COMMENTS

History is full of horrible wars that have not made this a better world. I grew up admiring Martin Luther King Jr. He tried to teach us to do something that seems to be much harder to do, to turn the other cheek, to love thy enemy and to build a better world together. Could the war between Israel and Hamas have been prevented if the two had been seeking a peaceful resolution over the years instead of acting as powerful advisories full of hate? I hope that someday world powers will learn to give peace a chance despite all our differences. Until that happens a few good people will continue to create various forms of media, reminding us for the sake of humanity that we need to change our ways.

The book that inspired this report:

Holocaust Representations in Animated Documentaries: The Contours of Commemoration by Liat Steir-Livny, Edinburgh University Press, 264 pages, hardback \$110.00, also available as an eBook. It examines representations of the holocaust, holocaust survivors and their descendants in animated documentaries. One promotion for the book says vast majority of animated holocaust documentaries marginalize the horrors and instead focus on bravery, resilience, and hope.

Note: One of my friends in Europe was surprised I was writing about this subject now. They commented these films

have been shown frequently in animation festivals all over Europe. I replied, "We don't have festivals like you do." Also, there is no entry fee to submit films to festivals in Europe, so why should European animators pay to enter festivals in the US?

You might want to see my three articles about the difference between U.S. and European festivals at awn.com. The third article may not be online yet, but it will bne up soon.

MARK GUSTAFSON, WHO CO-DIRECTED GUILLERMO DEL TORO'S OSCAR-WINNING 'PINOCCHIO,' DIED He was 64 and died after suffering a heart attack. After he earned an art degree from Pacific Northwest College of Art (BFA 1982), he joined Will Vinton Studios in Portland, Oregon and slowly worked his way up through the ranks.



'BURBANK,' A PLAY ABOUT THE DISNEY ARTISTS FORMING A UNION AND GOING ON STRIKE IN

1941, WILL GET OFF-BROADWAY AND STREAMING RUNS IN MARCH *Burbank* is a theatrical play about Disney artists' efforts to unionize. That effort started in the late 1930s and it resulted in the Disney Strike in 1941. It will get an off-Broadway run from March 12-24 and it be available to stream on the Thirdwing platform. Written by Cameron Darwin Bossert, the play focuses on the faceoff between Walt Disney and animator/strike leader Art Babbitt.

The strike saw 334 Disney employees walk out and picket and 303 employees remaining inside. Employees of the studio had numerous grievances, including low wages, salary cuts, arbitrary layoffs, and other issues. A review says "it captures the anxiety that can grip a workplace amid a labor struggle, and the ruthlessness that can ensue on all sides."

DISNEY HAS LOST A LAWSUIT AGAINST RON

DeSANTIS A federal judge dismissed Disney's lawsuit against Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis about who has the right to control development around the Walt Disney World Resort. The judge said Disney cannot sue DeSantis and his handpicked board that now controls the district in which the theme park operates because the statute reshaping the leadership structure and granting the governor the authority to appoint every member of the tax district's governing body is "facially constitutional" and cannot be challenged with a free speech claim (but the park is still the happiest place on earth of course)

!



Disney CEO Bob Iger painted a rosy picture of the company's future At the quarterly meeting for stockholders in February he reaffirmed that Disney's streaming business will be profitable this summer as losses narrowed in the division, thanks to higher revenue per user and efforts to control costs. The company, which is facing proxy fights with a pair of activist investors, said that its streaming business lost \$216 million this quarter, down from a loss of \$387 million last quarter, and less than \$1 billion a year ago. He reported higher average revenue per user at Disney+, even as subscribers dipped slightly following a price hike. Overall revenue was \$23.5 billion, even from a year ago, but somehow Wall Street math showed diluted earnings per share had increased to \$1.22, and operating income of \$3.9 billion.

In its entertainment division, revenues were \$10 billion, with operating income of \$874 million. In sports, revenues were \$4.8 billion with operating losses of \$103 million. In experiences, revenue was \$9.1 billion and operating income was \$3.1 billion. The company expects to expand in all of its current physical locations, as well as in its cruise line.

Bob Iger bets the future of Disney will involve greater involvement in the games industry. They recently invested \$1.5 billion in the gaming industry. He says, "When I saw

Gen Z and Gen Alpha and even millennials, and I saw the amount of time they were spending in terms of their total media screen time on video games, it was stunning to me, equal to what they spend on TV and movies.”



A COLOMBIAN GRAPHIC DESIGNER SCAMMED HER NATION’S MEDIA INTO BELIEVING SHE WORKED WITH HAYAO MIYAZAKI ON ‘THE BOY AND THE HERON’ Before the film opened worldwide, Geraldine Fernández, a graphic designer at a company that produces glass and aluminum products, convinced major media outlets in Columbia that she drew 25,000 frames of his latest feature. She claimed Miyazaki praised her work three times during the production and he affectionately referred to her as ‘the Colombian.’

In one interview she explained she worked for him for “over 20 months, I had to deliver 25 thousand frames, and those 25 thousand frames corresponded to a 10-second scene... It was a lot of work, but it was worth it, especially because Miyazaki was there.” Her math/facts are totally BS.

At 24 frames a second there are 240 frames in 10 seconds of screen time. It might take a seasoned animator a week to draw 10 seconds of animation.

While the media that carried her story believed her, they obviously couldn't be bothered to check facts. Her statements and interviews appeared in print and on the internet until somebody finally checked facts and sounded the alarm. Gosh, they found no mention of her in the film's advanced publicity, nor was she included on a printed list of the film's credits. When Cartoon Brew in the U.S. heard about the scam they contacted GKIDS, the U.S. distributor, and they also confirmed Fernández's name does not appear anywhere in the credits for *The Boy and the Heron*.

When news of her deception went viral in January, she denied her lies. She insisted everything she had said was true and the reason she couldn't offer any proof was she had signed a confidentiality agreement.

Since the story broke that her accomplishments were fake news, retractions have appeared in the press. *El Herald* said they trusted Fernández's claims in the good faith. They apologized to their readers for printing her lies. The paper *El Tiempo* also announced that they had failed to fact check and they hoped this type of mistake will not happen again.

After the truth was revealed, she admitted exaggerating her facts in a radio interview, but she still maintained her involvement in the film. Finally in late January she sent out a long apology to the press admitting she had fabricated her

involvement. She acknowledged that the situation got out of control and that it became increasingly difficult for her to retract her lies. Oh, it turns out she has also been accused of stealing other artists' work for her digital portfolio.

SEE 'THE 19TH ANNUAL OSCAR NOMINATED SHORT FILMS' Tues. Feb 27, 6:30 PM at the **Roxie** The nominated films were released in a package to movie theatres Feb 16. It contains the nominated shorts in the categories Best Live Action, Best Animated, and Best Documentary.

WATCH ROSS STRINGER'S 'CRAB DAY' Winner of the 2024 British Short Animation Award BAFTA. Google *Crab Day* (2023) to see it.

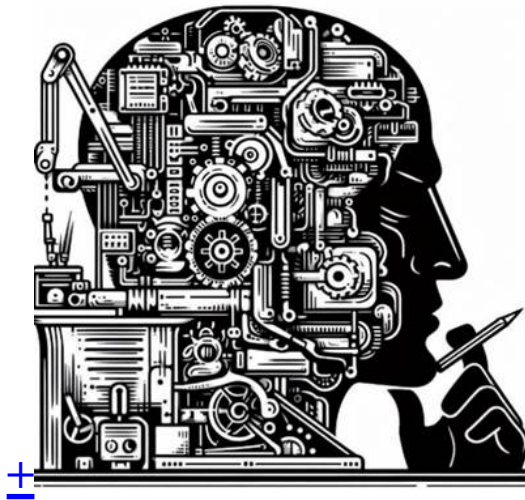


image by TeeJay.

WHAT EFFECT WILL AI HAVE ON ANIMATION AND ITS CREATORS? By Karl Cohen AI has become a hot topic and people enjoy speculating about its future. One friend told me, “Nobody is admitting that all the recent tech

job layoffs are due to AI.” Was he correct? I needed to find out what was going on and what was true.

It seems there is a general belief that many companies will be able to use the new technology to enhance productivity and profit, but only a few people are asking how will it affect the workers. Steve Lohr, who covers technology for the *New York Times*, was quite vague about that issue when he wrote on Feb. 1, 2024 that “a new generation of artificial intelligence is poised to turn old assumptions about technology on their head. It will have its biggest impact on white-collar workers with high-paying jobs in industries like banking and tech.” He referred to a report that avoids saying the technology will do away with large numbers of jobs. Instead, he said “workers need to better prepare for a future in which AI could play a significant role in many workplaces that until now have been largely untouched by technological disruption.” He did suggest some people may end up “building their AI replacements.”

Lohr also said, “There’s no question the workers who will be impacted most are those with college degrees, and those are the people who always thought they were safe.” He added, “Most experts expect that AI will mostly change jobs for the next few years rather than eliminate them — though that could change if the technology improves sharply.” He concluded saying workers will need “increased training to... adapt to a fast-arriving technology.”

More to the point, a discussion on *Philosophy Talk* on KLAW on Feb. 4, 2024, focused on work created by artists. It suggested that some artists will be replaced, but AI will also influence workers to go beyond what they were capable of creating before AI existed. The speaker, Michael Frank, a Stanford professor, said that when it comes to making aesthetic decisions, AI will make mistakes including not being able to make the best subtle choices. He believes AI is not capable at the present time to make those choices as there are endless possibilities of what our minds are capable of choosing and that AI is not that sophisticated. It works within a limited number of parameters. He also said AI isn't capable of writing a book like *Moby Dick*. (I flashed on it not being able to create a lovely film such as *The Man Who Planted Trees*.)

Next, I asked Google what influence AI will have on animation. It replied, "AI can create more realistic characters, improve lighting and shading, and even add special effects. This can help animators to create more visually stunning animations. Overall, AI is having a major impact on the animation industry. AI tools automate tasks, generate content, and improve animation quality."

I found one writer who feels AI will be quite destructive and it may will wipe out jobs. The person posted on the internet "[How AI Animation Will Decimate the Industry Within 5 Years](https://nicksaraev.com)" (nicksaraev.com). He believes AI animation is already *definitively better* than humans and many jobs will be replace by computers in less than 5 years. He

predicts, “Animation models won't be perfect, at least not for the next few years, but they don't need to be.” The animation art used to illustrate the article is a far cry from Disney quality. They look like simple generic anime images.

Years ago, I remember hearing people claim that motion capture technology was going to replace animators. It was going to cut production costs and it would create a better-looking film. The technology turned out to be expensive and there was something about it that just didn't look right, especially faces when they were not talking or moving. They looked dead. The technology is still in use at times, but it didn't revolutionize animation.

I suspect the doom and gloom writer is correct that some jobs will be lost to AI; however, most will be with companies trying to cut costs on small budget shows. In the past people tried to create low budget 3D computer animated features and most of those producers have moved on to other approaches to making a living.

If the first producers to use AI animation to tell a story, will it usher in a new direction for creative people to explore new directions in animation? What if it is used by low budget producers. Should we expect not particularly attractive looking work? Will the first uses just be seen as a novelty or will it be a marvelous introduction to an exciting new technology that will be further refined?

It is too early to know how successful AI will be as a

production tool. My preliminary study simply suggests that AI may prove to be a useful tool for artists interested in using it. It might turn out to be better suited to helping writers turn out run of the mill scripts quickly. In time it may prove capable of creating both cartoony as well as photo-realistic animation. The public is quite comfortable being in the non-realistic world of animation so don't expect Disney to replace its animators with banks of AI computers as it will probably turn out to be labor intensive to turn out quality work.



IS TOTALLY AMAZING AI ANIMATION ALMOST HERE? The above photo of extinct prehistoric mastodons is from a video that was released Feb. 16, 2024. It was created by the company OpenAI using their Sora system (still in development). “Several giant woolly mammoths approach treading through a snowy meadow, their long woolly fur lightly blows in the wind as they walk, snow covered trees and dramatic snow-capped mountains in the distance, mid-

afternoon light with wispy clouds and a sun high in the distance.” See OpenAI’s latest show reel, released a few days ago. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HK6y8DAPN_0

The new reel appears to be a considerable leap forward for generative AI technology. It can now create new video footage from a photo, artwork or just text input (instructional prompts). The technology is also excellent at making smooth camera movement (pans, zooms, trucking shots, aerial shots) and one report said in some cases the shot can last as long as a minute.

While the system can do impressive things, it has trouble with some of the basics. For example, it can show a person taking a bite out of something, but when the mouth opens the something may still be whole and not show any teeth marks. The system has yet to learn cause and effect.

Lip synch is another basic problem for software engineers to master. Right now, they can make lips move on a still image of a person’s face, but the result is ridiculous looking. It will probably take a lot of computer power and time to create convincing images of people talking with all the facial muscles moving underneath the skin in a convincing way. Eye and head movements should look natural. The nuances of facial expressions may turn out to be a major challenge to mastered, and harder if the person is talking.

The day the amazing reel was released, the *NY Times* said “OpenAI has completed a deal that values the San Francisco artificial intelligence company at \$80 billion or

more, nearly tripling its valuation in less than 10 months, according to three people with knowledge of the deal.” Microsoft had put \$13 billion into the company so far.

The young company is already famous for creating ChatGPT. They are also known for a recent scandal where the Board of OpenAI fired their CEO Sam Altman because they thought he wasn't addressing the dangerous aspects of AI. A few days later Microsoft put him back as CEO. Then he fired some of his Board.

OpenAI has told the press it is aware of the potential for its technology to be misused. As a result, the company has chosen to slowly roll out the tool while they “assess critical areas for harms or risks.”

None of the software is for sale at present and when it is available it may not prove to be very useful for someone with questionable intentions. Someday, perhaps soon, lip synch will be perfected enough to create realistic images of politicians making fake statements or other kinds of deceptive propaganda. Hopefully the government and/or industry will find ways to detect bogus uses of the technology and warn the public while it is being removed from the internet.

For more on OpenAI <https://futurism.com/openai-sora-ai-simulate-worlds>



THE PRESS HAS REVEALED A SERIOUS LABOR CRISIS AT UNIVERSAL STUDIOS' THEME PARK

Labor problems at the Disney theme parks are well-known. Now the *Los Angeles Times* reports a UCLA study says that Universal Studios' theme park in Hollywood has serious problems. They make massive investment in attractions, but try to cut costs on the laborers who keep it running. Many workers in this profitable theme park are underpaid and struggle to pay rent and buy food. One worker is reported to say, "It's a constant battle, tearing at us mentally."

The article included numerous stories about people struggling to survive. The study says 44% of the workers reported that they worried about being evicted from their homes, and more reported they have at times had to reduce the size of the meals they eat or have had to skip them. A quarter of the workforce has used food stamps, food banks or other need-based food donation programs.

The survey interviewed 1,330 park workers who were

in two unions that represent most Universal Studios personnel including people who dress up a film characters such as Scooby-Doo, Gru, Hello Kitty and the Bride of Frankenstein. They also talked to ride operators, tour guides, carnival barkers, clerks, parking lot attendants, store clerks, cooks, bartenders, baristas, runners and warehouse workers. I find it shocking that the unions don't fight harder for livable wages.

The example of how desperate people are is summed up in the quote, "I've seen people get fired because they take food out of the trash to eat it. (Management) lets them go because they say that's still stealing." <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/business/business-news/inside-poverty-crisis-universal-studios-1235817174/>

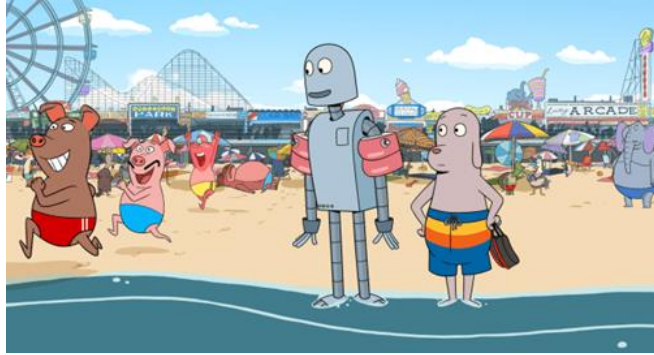
SF INDIE FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES THEIR WINNERS

The Audience Award for Best Animation went to *The Grand Book* directed by Arjan Brentjes.

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THE ANNIE AWARDS 2024





***Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* wins best commercial feature and *Robot Dreams* wins best independent feature at the Annie Awards. You can see the entire three-hour award ceremony online at <https://annieawards.org/winners>**

Spider-Man: Across the Spider Verse was the show biggest winner both in applause and for winning all seven categories that it was nominated in (best commercial feature, FX, character design, direction, music, production design, and editorial).

Robot Dreams won best independent feature, and ***War is Over! Inspired by the Music of John and Yoko*** was the best independent short. It also just won Spain's Goya Award for Best Animated Feature.

Hayao Miyazaki's ***The Boy and the Heron*** won Annies for character animation and Miyazaki's storyboarding. It has won most of the critics' awards. It also just won the Best Animated feature at the BAFTA ceremony in the UK

Nimona had nine Annie nominations and it won for voice acting and writing.

Netflix's *Blue Eye Samurai* won six Annies (for TV mature, FX, character animation, production design, writing, editorial).

Three honorary Winsor McCay Awards were given. They went to legendary animator and director *Charlotte "Lotte" Reiniger* (posthumously), Studio Ghibli composer *Joe Hisaishi*, and National Film Board animator and producer *Marcy Page*.

The Ub Iwerks Award for technical advancement was awarded posthumously to *John Oxberry* for his developing and producing the Oxberry animation stand that was used for many decades to shoot cell animation.

A Special Achievement Award was presented to all the artists of **Walt Disney Animation**.

ASIFA Hollywood presented a well-run and nice looking three-hour long ceremony. [51st Annie Awards - YouTube](#) If you want to see **Marcy Page**, who studied and taught at SF State and worked at Colossal Pictures before moving to Montreal, her appearance starts at one hour fifty minutes. It includes clips from her personal film *Paradis* and clips of work she produced including the four films that received Academy Award nominations (two won Oscars). Ron Diamond introduces her.

Congratulations to ASIFA-Hollywood and their crew for a fine evening honoring animation. The show included

clips for almost all the winners and a chance to see some of the talent who created it. It was also an interesting fashion show from formal attire to white tennis shoes.



‘DESPICABLE ME 4’ TRAILER IS NOW ONLINE Take a look at the latest edition of Hollywood’s most financially successful animation franchise. What does that tell us about popular taste? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQlr9-rF32A>



SHOULD ANIMATION BE THIS INTENSE?

Hazbin Hotel by Vivienne Medrano, who is 31 and a

graduate of the School for Visual Arts, is so packed full of energy both visually and in the soundtrack that it may require multiple viewings to try and understand what is going on. I've been led to believe by a friend, who is tuned into what is hot in current internet culture, that Vivienne's aesthetic is a prime example of a current trend. She has 9 million followers and over a billion hits.

Vivienne writes she has been absorbing and creating animation from a young age. She is part of a highly talented new breed of independent artists that may exist with a generation gap between them and animators from the past. I was told "the new animators don't know there was even a history of animation, just that if they don't go viral before they finish high school, they are over the hill. On the other hand, animators who know the history, never hear of the immensely popular animation going on in the internet." My informant added that if you ask a young internet animator what is the most viewed animation ever made the answer won't be Mickey Mouse; it might be "Baby Shark."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vivienne_Medrano
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzfyYtgvkx5mLy8nLLayYg> https://hazbinhotel.fandom.com/wiki/Vivienne_Medrano



CINANIMA by NANCY DENNEY-PHELPS

Some festivals are such a pleasure to attend that I want to go back every year. Cinanima is one of those festivals. The programming is always excellent, the hospitality is superb, and Cristina Lima, who has been the heart and soul of the festival for so many years, always makes me feel right at home.

Cinanima is the oldest animation festival in Portugal and the third oldest in the world. The Grand Prix-winning film each year automatically qualifies for the Oscars as well as the prestigious Cartoon d'Or.



O Pesadelo do Antonio Maria

2023 marked the 100th anniversary of Portuguese animation. *O Pesadelo do Antonio Maria* (*The Nightmare of Antonia Maria*) directed by caricaturist Joaquin Guerreiro was the first Portuguese film, thought to be lost until Antonio Gaio, director of the Cinanima Festival from 1980 until he died in 2015, discovered 150 original drawings from the film in a bookstore. A reconstruction of the film using the original drawings was completed in 2006.

The 2-minute film is drawn in pencil on a white background. In it, Antonio Maria da Silva, six-time president of the Republic of Portugal (1910 to 1926), walks home and goes to bed. Instead of a peaceful night's sleep, he has a nightmare that an angry crowd in the street outside of his home is demanding an end to food shortages and crying out for freedom from an oppressive regime.

To celebrate the 100th anniversary, the festival mounted an extensive exhibition about the history of Portuguese animation. Along with very early animation devices such as an ornate zoetrope, a praxinoscope, and a magic lantern, there were film posters as well as original artwork from Portuguese films, and a continuous loop of noted Portuguese animation was projected on a screen in the space.

One area of the exhibition was devoted to “47 years of Cinanima in posters”. The selection of festival posters, designed by Joao Machado, was a trip down memory lane for

anyone, like me, who has been coming to the festival for many years. Machado is a renowned Porto graphic designer and is known for his animated interactive posters. Several of them in the exhibition could be brought to life by clicking an app next to the poster.



Shadow animation demonstration

The exhibition was a lovely tribute to a century of Portuguese animation, and the Municipal Museum of Espinho was the perfect location for the exhibition. The large room offered a spacious area for the memorabilia to be displayed without feeling cramped or crowded.

The Cinema Lobby Exhibition Gallery was the site for a special exhibition of Abi Feijo's 1963 film *Os Salteadores (The Outlaws)*. With original plans and drawings from the film on display, we could see the techniques that Abi used to create the shadowy effects and how he designed and constructed the film with pencil on paper to build tension.



Os Salteadores exhibition

The inspiration for the film was the short story *Os Salteadores* from Jorge de Sena's book *Os Graos – Captaes*. The 14-minute film takes place in the 1950s, during a reign of terror of the Salazar dictatorship (1932 to 1968), a dark period in Portuguese history. Three men in a car at night on a trip along the Portuguese coast are discussing the identity of a group of men who were captured and executed years before when the Spanish Civil War was drawing to a close. The three perspectives merge into one single discourse revealing social attitudes and ideological standpoints concerning Fascism in Portugal. The film premiered at the Cinanima International Animation Festival in 1993 and Abi received the City of Espinho Grand Prix Award for his film.

It seems like 2023 was the year of films depicting toxic relationships between family members, government policies, or a person's inner demons. In her 15-minute film, *The Family Portrait*, Lea Vidakovic set her film on a quiet Sunday afternoon in an aristocratic family home just before the First World War. Andras, master of the household, and

his young daughter Zsofia are caught by surprise when Andras' brother Zolten pays an unexpected visit, along with twelve members of his family. It doesn't take long for the visitors to wreak havoc and destruction on the entire house. You can feel the tension build in Andras and his daughter as a terrific strain is put on the family relationship.



The Family Portrait

The beautiful puppets were all made by Lea. She also gives attention to detail for all of her props right down to the crumbs of pastry on a plate. The color palette of the film is evocative of an early 20th-century painting. Visually the film is gorgeous and the story keeps you engaged and wondering what these unexpected visitors could possibly do next. When Lea was creating the basic plot of the film, she was inspired by a quote from the Japanese Buddhist thinker and peace activist Daisaku Ikeda, “Every family has its own specific circumstances and problems that only it can truly understand”. The film won the prestigious Jury’s Special Award.

It’s a nightmare that I wanted to bring to the screen”

Joachim Herisse, director of *Skinned* says about his stop-motion film. He certainly did create a film that is creepy and yet you can't take your eyes off of it. Siamese twins who are joined at the leg live in the middle of a swamp in an old, run-down house. Mentally and physically the opposite, one sister is fat with an insatiable appetite and the other one is skinny. One sister wants freedom while the other wants them to stay together, just as they are.



Skinned

Between the sisters' raising and endlessly killing rabbits to satisfy the fat sister's insatiable hunger for meat and the brutal death of the other sister, there is plenty of gore and horror. The film is so beautifully animated and the story is well worth the 15 minutes that you spend watching it. The jury awarded *Skinned* a Commendation for the Best Art Direction, which the film definitely deserved.

In a year of very strong animated films, I was surprised that *Our Uniform* was selected as the Grand Prix but it is a

worthy choice. First-time animator Yegane Moghaddam's film is painted directly onto the cloth used for making Iranian girls' school uniforms. The uniforms represent to Yegane the robbing of women of their individualities and personalities, thus denying them any self-esteem.

The Iranian film is a personal story as Yegane unfolds her school memories through the wrinkles and fabric of her old school uniform. Along the way, she explores the roots of the idea that she is nothing but a female that was ingrained in her during her school years.



Our Uniform

Our Uniform is Oscar-nominated, which I hope will give more people the opportunity to watch this film. I look forward to seeing more from this talented young animator who thinks outside of the box as far as technique is concerned.

Along with the screenings and exhibitions, there were

six masterclasses. Estonian animator Priit Tender was on the feature film jury. His latest film ***Dog Apartment*** was short-listed for the Oscars. Sardonic and surreal, the stop-motion film was inspired by a poem by the Estonian surrealist Andres Ehin, about an aging ballet dancer who is fighting his mundane life, in the rut of a boring routine. It is one of my favorite films making the festival rounds right now.



The 14-minute film was produced at Nukufilm Studio. Established in 1957, Nukufilm is renowned for its stop-motion work and the creation of beautifully crafted puppets and sets. ***Dog Apartment*** is as lovely to watch as the story is engaging. During his masterclass, Priit talked about the creative process and how he works.

Serbian animators Ana Nedeljkovic and Nikola Majdak's films are known for their political satire and biting wit. During their masterclass, they talked about how their films come from personal experiences that they translate into animation.

Joao Gonzales taught his audience how to take an idea and turn it into a reality in his presentation of "From the

Subconscious to the Screen”. He certainly knows how to do it because his short film, *Ice Merchants*, was nominated for an Oscar and won numerous festival awards last year.

The presentations by the Portugal Film Commission and the symposium on Perspectives on Portuguese Animation were designed especially for the Portuguese audience. One project that I found particularly interesting was a meeting of secondary school teachers and students from Espinho and the neighboring town of Ovar, to discuss ideas for the creation and production of an animated film to be premiered at Cinanima in 2024. I am very curious about what they come up with. I look forward to seeing it at the festival in November.

Cinanima strives to develop film literacy among children and young people. Monday through Friday in the Casino Espinho Auditorium there were screenings designed specifically for school groups. In addition to the programs during the festival, Cinanima offers six programs of short films to be screened in the classroom year around. The various programs are age-appropriate for either elementary, middle or high school students. Scripts are also provided to the teachers to help facilitate discussion about the films.



Traditional Portuguese fishing boat no longer in the water but in front of city hall

For years Nik and I have had a favorite little bar down at the south end of the beach where the fishing boats came in. Over the years the boats have disappeared one by one, and so did the fisherman's bar. This year when we walked to the end of the beach there was a new little bar with no tourists, just locals and inexpensive wine. It was a lovely surprise.



Nancy with Maria Anestopoulou at Pocas Cellars

This year the festival organized two excursions. We did not go to the Pocas Cellars wine tasting in Vila Nova de Gaia because we had been there before. Their ports are very delicious and the tour is fascinating but that was the day we wanted to walk to the end of the beach.

We did go on a guided tour of the archaeological and environmental landmarks of Castro de Ovil and Paramos-Esmoriz Lagoon. Castros were a type of settlement that people on the Iberian Peninsula built a few centuries before Christ. The castros were fortified villages located on hills with long, clear views of the surrounding terrain. The villages were protected by a stone wall and/or a deep moat.



Castro de Ovil is located on a hill with the Paramos riverbank to the south and southwest and a deep moat to the north and northeast. Archaeological work began there in the early 1980's. The remains of the 13 structures date back to three or two centuries BC and appear to have been abandoned sometime during the first century. We had an excellent tour guide who gave us thorough explanations about what we were looking at.

From Castro de Ovil we went to Paramos – Esmoriz Lagoon which has a long wooden walkway through the lagoon. With over 100 species of birds, it is an especially important location as a stopover point during migration season. It was quite a long walk and by the time we got back to the bus which then took us to lunch at a restaurant on Paramos Beach, I was truly hungry and thirsty.

When I am at a festival, the hosting festival programmer and/or director is always too busy to spend much time visiting, so it was a great pleasure to spend quality time with good friends Andrea Bauer, head of programming at the Trickfilm Festival in Stuttgart, and Maria Anestopoulou, Director of Anima Syros in Greece. Nik and I shared several leisurely meals with the ladies. good food, lovely

conversation, and lots of laughter.

Nik and I first met Andrea on the beach in Espinho many, many years ago. We were walking our two dogs on the beach and a woman came up and ask if she could pet our dogs. We started talking and discovered that we were all there for the festival. By the end of the week, we had become friends and Andrea then invited us to her festival. Since then, we have never missed the Trickfilm Festival.

I can't thank Cristina Lima enough for inviting me to be on the festival selection committee and for her friendship throughout the years. Thank you so much to the festival for their lovely hospitality. As always, I had a wonderful time.

The next edition of the festival will take place from 11 to 17 November 2024. You can find out more about Cinanima and how to submit a film at: www.cinanima.pt

Anime Your Way with Carlos Nieto III Saturday, April 6, 2024

Kids Workshop from 1:00-2:30pm

**Teen + Adult Workshop from
3:00-4:30pm**

Free with registration

A Cartoon Art Museum Workshop



San Francisco, CA: Calling all young creators! The Cartoon Art Museum is excited to host two free 90-minute anime workshops with comics artist and [Anime Your Way](#) founder **Carlos Nieto III**.

Anime Your Way is a comprehensive step by step drawing program that teaches how to create and modify an anime character from scratch, regardless of drawing experience. Using simple shapes and easy to understand instructions, participants will gain the knowledge to create their very own unique anime characters. All materials are provided.

Join Carlos on **Saturday, April 6, 2024, (Kids 6 to 13: 1:00-2:30pm, Teens 14+ to Adult: 3:00-4:30pm)** for a lively time. Both workshops are free but advance registration is required; please visit <https://guestli.st/769701>) to sign up.

THEY SHOT THE PIANO PLAYER.

FILM FOLLOWS A JOURNALIST TO UNDERSTAND WHY A BOSSA NOVA PIANO PLAYER WAS SHOT. BY TEAM THAT DID CHICO AND RITA

OPENS MARCH 1ST - Landmark Opera Plaza, San Francisco

A HISTORIC PHOTO



David Hilberman's kids. Mark on the left, looking down and brother Dan (about 1 year old) and a still younger cousin Bernard enjoy the emerging spring.

ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Editor: Karl Cohen

Contributors include Nancy Denney-Phelps, Paul Naas, Jim Middleton and other friends of ASIFA

Special thanks to Tsvika Oren from Tel Aviv for his help in researching the article on the Holocaust

Proofreaders Jim Middleton, Scott Kravitz and Paul Naas

Special thanks to Nancy Denney-Phelps who 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. Now that we are supposedly post-Covid we had hopes of a rebound with live events once more, but that isn't happening yet.

TO KEEP THE CHAPTER ALIVE UNTIL WE CAN FIND

**VOLUNTEERS TO MAKE LIVE EVENTS AND/OR ONLINE PROGRAMS HAPPEN AGAIN, WE ARE OFFERING A
FREE TEMPORARY MEMBERSHIP**

NEW MEMBERS NEEDED, TELL OTHERS TO JOIN

HELP BUILD UP OUR MAILING LIST AGAIN. THAT WILL GET YOU OUR MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FREE AND WHATEVER SCREENINGS THAT ASIFA-SF MEMBERS GET INVITED TO.

Contact karlcohen@earthlink.net to get on our email list.