



'THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES' IS NOW ON YOUTUBE AnimaCrackers is the San Francisco team of Mark West and Barbara Bayne. The film is a parable for all times, Hans Christian Andersen's cautionary tale about a vain emperor and an entire kingdom that ignores the truth for fear of being judged. He gets exposed before his subjects when a small child breaks the spell by questioning the lie. It was completed this year.
<https://www.youtube.com/user/animacrackers/videos>

UPDATE – THANKS TO A LEGAL TEAM HIRED FOR HER BY DONALD TRUMP SHE WAS NEVER TRIED FOR THIS HORRIBLE CRIME



THE CHARLES M. SCHULZ MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTER HAS REOPENED Current exhibitions include *Lucy! Fussbudget to Feminist* (through September 12, 2021), the first exhibition to focus exclusively on the outspoken, strong-willed *Peanuts* character, and *Greetings, Charlie Brown! The Peanuts-Hallmark Connection* (through mid-June). Also on view is a new exhibition, *Girl Power in Peanuts* (through summer 2021), highlighting the dynamic female characters in Charles Schulz's comic strip and the exceptional women who influenced the cartoonist.

Charles M. Schulz Museum & Research Center
 2301 Hardies Lane, Santa Rosa, CA 95403
 (707) 579-4452 | schulzmuseum.org



ANIME SENSATION 'DEMON SLAYER: MUGEN TRAIN' SETS U.S. RELEASE AFTER BREAKING JAPAN BOX OFFICE RECORD *Demon Slayer: Mugen Train* has out-grossed Miyazaki's *Spirited Away* to become the highest-grossing film at the box office in Japan. This anime sensation opens in the US Friday, April 23, 2021 in 4XD theatres and IMAX locations. The film will be available in both a subtitled version and an English-language one. Tickets for show times will go on sale April 9.

It was directed by Haruo Sotozaki from a story by Koyoharu Gotoge" *Demon Slayer: Mugen Train*. It is set after the events of the hit 2019 anime television series *Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba*. The feature centers on a young man's search for a cure to save his sister, who turned into a demon after their family was slaughtered by demons. His journey includes his investigating the mysterious disappearance of over 40 people aboard the Mugen Train.

The film will go on sale at Microsoft, Vudu, Google Play, and PlayStation stores and on Apple TV beginning June 22.



THE GLAS ANIMATION FESTIVAL WILL PRESENT 23 PROGRAMS ONLINE APRIL 5-11

Passes are available in advance. Passes are PRO PASS are \$50 and STUDENTS are \$25. They provide access to all events (screenings, panels, workshops, talks, and networking [?] events). <https://glas2021.com/passes/> Program details at <https://glas2021.com/all-programs/>



One of the festivals highlights will be an interview with Terry Gilliam, one of the most iconic, imaginative, and inspiring directors of all time. From memorable cutouts in Monty Python, elaborate fantasies in *Time Bandits* and *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, science-fiction epics such as *Brazil* and *12 Monkeys*, to more intimate films Terry Gilliam has left his unmistakable stamp of unbound creativity, chaos, and splendor on film.

Terry Gilliam will talk to Jeanette Jeanenne about his introduction to animation, his path to directing live-action features, themes in his work, filmmaking philosophies, and more.



Andreas Hykade's 'Altötting'

GLAS IS RISEN!

BY MARTY McNAMARA

On Easter Monday, April 5, the Bay Area's international animation festival will be resurrected! GLAS cannot yet return to meet on-site in Berkeley, but this sixth annual gathering will be a major expansion of last October's 2020 edition and a return to the comprehensive programming that distinguished its first four in-person festivals. ASIFA members will find GLAS online loaded with outstanding animation experiences from April 5 –11.

GLAS 2021 is built around 33 short animated films in competition, split into five 60-65 minute programs. Highlights include an impressive group of prize winners from other major animation festivals, such as Kang-min Kim's *KKum* (Ottawa Grand Prize), Shoko Hara's *Just a Guy* (Zagreb Grand Prize), Andreas Hykade's *Altötting* (Ottawa Best Script), Heloise Ferlay's *To the Dusty Sea* (Cyprus Best Animated Film), Shiva Sadegh Asadi's *Crab* (Hiroshima Special Jury Prize) and Kirill Khachaturov's *Naked* (Best student film at Annecy, Zagreb and Ottawa).

Continuing the award winner parade, *KKum* is also nominated for a 2021 ASIFA-Hollywood Annie award in the Best Short Subject category, as are two other films featured at GLAS: Marie Jacotey and Lola Halifa-Legrand's *Blue Fear* and Bastien Dubois' *Souvenir Souvenir*. Winners will be revealed at the Annie awards ceremony on Friday, April 16th at 7 p.m. PST, just five days after GLAS ends.

As in past years, GLAS will also include a separate ten-film US Competition for American work. Here the best known is Erick Oh's current Oscar nominee *Opera*. The supplementary and non-competitive International Showcase has been reduced this year to one eight-film program, whereas the Family Competition grew to two 57-minute programs with a total of 14 films.



Featured in Family programs is Anita Killi's extraordinary stop-motion *Mother Didn't Know* (Hiroshima Special Prize and Ottawa Best Soundtrack), plus the beautiful Hawaiian legend by Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu, Dean Hamer, and Joe Wilson, *Kapaemahu* (Oscar shortlist, Hiroshima Special Prize and First Place at NoCal's Animation Chico). Both are targeted for adult audiences, but can still be appreciated by older children.

GLAS' stellar group of 2020 champions represents wildly diverse subject matter and production techniques from a truly international community of directors. Of the aforementioned filmmakers only Oh and the Hawaiian team are American. Jacotey, Halifa-Legrand, Dubois and Ferlay are all French, Hara and Hykade German, Kim South Korean, Asadi Iranian, Khachaturov Russian and Killi Norwegian. This just hints at the variety of the festival auteurs' backgrounds.

Despite the opportunity to view these award winners, GLAS attendees will still be most eager to see the majority of entries that are brand new. No one at ASIFA-SF News served on the pre-selection committee, so we cannot promote specific new films yet, but we are as excited to see them as you should be. Unlike last year's film screenings in GLAS 2020, we do not anticipate that specific entries will be geo-blocked for participants in the Bay Area.

Returning to GLAS this year is an extensive lineup of conversations with visiting luminaries (Terry Gilliam, Peter Chung, Nick Cross), workshops with panels of industry professionals (Landing a Job, Pitching a Project), retrospectives from distinguished veterans and emerging stars (Jan Svankmajer, Dahee Jeong, Kathy Smith, Shen Jie, Wendy Tilby & Amanda Forbis), demonstrations of innovative techniques (Jonathan Djob Nkondo, Ted Wiggin), an overview of Independent Latin American animation curated by Argentinian festival director Barbara Cerro, and a documentary on the idiosyncratic creative process and marital partnership of legendary surrealists Jan and Eva Svankmajer.

The Svankmajer retrospective includes all three of the Czech animator's most celebrated shorts: *Dimensions of Dialogue*; *Darkness, Light, Darkness*; and *Food*. In addition to a dozen television commercials, Canadian Film Board collaborators Tilby and Forbis will show their co-directed *When the Day Breaks* and *Wild Life*, as well as Wendy's brilliant paint-on-glass classic, *Strings*, all three of them Oscar-nominated.

One of the most accomplished animators to appear in the last decade, Dahee Jeong has earned the Grand Prix at Annecy for *Man on a Chair* and at Hiroshima for *The Empty*. Interestingly, the Q&A after her screening will be with fellow Korean director Kang-Min Kim.

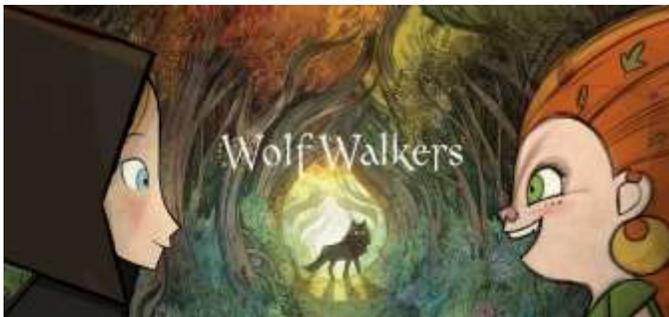
Another rising talent, China's Shen Jie will screen all seven of his bold productions, and Australian new media artist Kathy Smith, now a revered mentor at USC, can broaden the festival's focus with her expertise in animated installations. This promises to be one of the most notable sets of retrospectives in the festival's history.

Jonathan Djob Nkondo created the GLAS 2021 Signal Film, and he will join Dahee Jeong and Shen Jie on the festival jury. With the exception of four live events, all programs appear to be available Video On Demand from a specific start date and time until the festival ends at 12:00 PM (noon) on April 12. Each viewer will have a 24-hour window in which to complete viewing a program once s/he has selected it. As we go to press, a final schedule has not yet been posted. GLAS 2021 should be an outstanding festival that will start right after this newsletter arrives. Passes are now available at the GLAS website. The arts have taken a beating during this pandemic, but are starting to come back strong. **(More GLAS images are on the last page.)**



PETE DOCTER GETS HIS 4TH BEST ANIMATED FEATURE NOMINATION FOR DIRECTING 'SOUL.' Producer Dana Murray, who was previously nominated for the 2017 animated short *Lou*, was also named for his work on *Soul*. The film also received nominations for its score by Trent Reznor, Atticus Ross and Jon Batiste and a sound nomination for Ren Klyce, Coya Elliott and David Parker.

Docter's fourth nomination for best animated feature is a record for that category. He won Oscars for *Up* (2009) and *Inside Out* (2015). He was also nominated for *Monsters, Inc.* in 2001, the category's debut year. Docter has had nine Oscar nominations as he has also earned screenplay nominations for *Toy Story*, *Wall-E*, *Up* and *Inside Out* and he was nominated in the animated short category for *Mike's New Car*.



Wolfwalkers director Tomm Moore received his third Academy Award nomination along with co-director Ross Stewart and producers Paul Young and Stéphan Roelants. Moore's previous two films in his Irish folklore trilogy, *The Secret of Kells* (2009) and *Song of the Sea* (2015), were also Academy Award-nominated.

Wolfwalkers was made for just \$12 million! (*Soul's* budget was said to be over \$150 million.) It is a hand-drawn fantasy feature inspired by history and Irish folklore. The film is a "love letter to hand-drawn animation and its timeless potential, to nature and our shared biosphere and to our home here in Ireland, its history and culture, its folklore and its people" according to Moore and Stewart. Its theme is empathy and "the ability for people to see past their differences," said Moore. He hopes more people will see the movie and respond to its message. Of its hand-drawn approach, he

noted, "We're really happy to be a part of the resurgence of the art form."

Also nominated for best animated feature is Netflix original *Over the Moon*, directed by Glen Keane. Keane is a Disney "legend" for animating the beast in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. He also won an Oscar for animating the short *Dear Basketball*, a film about Kobe Bryant.

Aardman Animations' stop-motion feature *A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon* was nominated (available on Netflix in the US). It was directed by Richard Phelan and Will Becher and produced by Paul Kewley. Aardman's first *Shaun the Sheep Movie* was nominated in 2016 for an Oscar. The studio has also received nominations for their feature *Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*; and nominations for their Nick Park shorts *Creature Comforts*, *The Wrong Trousers* and *A Close Shave*.

The fifth Best Feature nomination went to Pixar's *Onward* directed by Dan Scanlon and Kori Rae.



Wolfwalkers

Bill Desowitz writing in *IndieWire* says, "The only 2D nominee, *Wolfwalkers* (released theatrically through GKids), poses the biggest Oscar threat to *Soul*, after collecting the majority of critics' awards. Representing the final installment in Moore's Irish folktale trilogy (*The Secret of Kells* and *Song of the Sea*), *Wolfwalkers* centers on an 11-year-old female apprentice hunter forced to re-evaluate her mission to wipe out the last remaining wolf pack in 17th century Ireland. The 2D work juxtaposes a block-print style for Kilkenny with watercolors and ink splats for the forest and a charcoal look for the wolves."

"The animation industry adores Moore, considered the Irish Miyazaki (Hayao took home the last 2D animated feature Oscar in 2001, for *Spirited Away*), so the third time could be the charm."

THE FIVE NOMINATED FILMS FOR BEST ANIMATED SHORT ARE: *Burrow* by Madeline Sharafian (U.S.), *Genius Loci* by Adrien Mériçeau (France), *If Anything Happens I Love You* by Michael Govier and Will McCormack (U.S.), *Opera* by Erick Oh

(South Korea/U.S.) and *Yes People* by Gísli Darri Halldórsson (Iceland).

The 93rd Oscars will be held on Sunday, April 25th, 2021, and will be televised live on ABC and in more than 225 countries and territories worldwide.



WILL NETFLIX WIN THE ANIMATED SHORT OSCAR FOR 'IF ANYTHING HAPPENS I LOVE YOU'? Bill Desowitz writing in IndieWire says “all five nominees explore the turmoil of a divided country and world, where the need for unity is the best salvation for attaining happiness and closure.” He calls the front-runners *If Anything Happens I Love You* from Netflix and *Burrow* from Pixar.

Netflix's short is about grieving parents who are visited by shadows of themselves and their deceased young daughter who was the victim of a school shooting. It was directed by Will McCormack who co-wrote *Toy Story 4*, and Michael Govier. It was animated by an all-female crew.

I've seen all 5 of the shorts and frankly *If Anything Happens I Love You* is a remarkable, powerful emotional work, especially with all the horrible gun violence in the news lately. I've never reacted to a work of animation like I did seeing it!



Pixar's *Burrow* is by storyboard artist Madeline Sharafian who worked on *Coco*. It is a lovely tale about a cute young rabbit who is digging her dream home. She finds support from her neighbors and it stresses the importance of community.

Opera by Erik Oh (South Korea/U.S.), a former Pixar animator, is a monumental work dealing with

racism, terrorism, war, natural disasters, and general chaos. It is impressive, but it left me cold.



Genius Loci by Adrien Mérigeau from France explores a loner who experiences the chaos inside her mind and throughout the city via mystical spirits. It's a gorgeous 2D short comprised of delicate drawings and fluid animations.

The Icelandic *Yes-People*, by Gísli Darri Halldórsson, from Iceland deals with the daily struggles of life, from the mundane to the serious by saying “yes.” My wife and I started laughing out loud when we watched it.



THE OSCAR NOMINATED SHORTS WILL BE SHOWN ONLINE BY THE ROXIE STARTING FRI. APRIL 2 It is an excellent program with 3 additional animated shorts to give you a great 99 minute program. My wife loves nature films so she loved *The Snail and the Whale* about a snail who wants to see the world. He finds a way to do it. The other two films are *To Gerard*, a highly polished film from Dreamworks about a man who dreams about being a stage magician and *Kapaemahu*, a lovely film based on a legend from Hawaii.

Also at the Roxie Virtual Cinema are 90 minute programs of the 5 Oscar nominated live action shorts and a program of the 5 Oscar nominated documentaries. <https://www.roxie.com/>



PAY DISCRIMINATION SUIT AGAINST DISNEY NOW ALLEGES DISNEY EMPLOYEES WERE FORBIDDEN FROM DISCLOSING WHAT THEY WERE ACTUALLY PAID A law suit over unequal pay for women now includes a claim that the company illegally prohibits employees from discussing their pay with others. It has been added to a lawsuit accusing Disney of paying women less than men, and it comes as no surprise that Disney is aggressively pushing back.

The fight over equal pay at Disney started in April 2019 when two employees, LaRonda Rasmussen and Karen Moore, filed a lawsuit claiming that Disney discriminates against female workers by paying them less than their male counterparts. Since then, eight more current and former female Disney employees have joined the case that could result in a class action suit over “rampant gender pay discrimination.” Now they have added a claim involving pay secrecy, a topic that is becoming a larger part of the national conversation about workplace equality.

Disney has aggressively pushed back saying it maintains “robust pay-equity practices and policies” and calling the accusations “ill-informed and unfounded.”

In March the women expanded their complaint to include Disney “maintaining a strict policy of pay secrecy” in violation of California law. Five of the plaintiffs were told “multiple times by their superiors never to speak about their compensation (salaries, bonuses or raises) with other Disney employees,” according to the latest filing. One plaintiff, Chelsea Hanke, now a senior home entertainment manager at the company, claimed to have “direct knowledge of a female Disney employee being disciplined for disclosing her pay to co-workers.”

In a statement, Disney said it “does not prohibit its employees from talking about their pay and looks forward to proving the falsity of this latest claim.”

Under the National Labor Relations Act of 1935, it is illegal for employers to retaliate against their workers for discussing wages with colleagues. California added its own statute in 1984 and in the California Fair

Pay Act from 2015. Those acts further protect the right of employees to openly discuss their own pay. Does pay transparency close the gender wage gap?

Note: In February, 2021 Google agreed to pay \$3.8 million, including \$2.6 million in back pay, to resolve an underpaying of women dispute. This month, the executive branch of the European Union proposed legislation that would force companies with more than 250 employees to report on the difference in pay between men and women doing the same work.

Several of the plaintiffs say that they have been performing work associated with more highly compensated positions, but that Disney insisted that promotions could occur only along a ladder — from manager to senior manager and then to director, for instance. At the same time, men were sometimes allowed to skip a step, according to the complaint.



ASIFA-HOLLYWOOD’S NOMINATION FOR ITS 48TH ANNUAL ANNIE AWARDS They recognize the year’s best in the field of animation. This year’s ceremony will be streamed live, courtesy of *Variety* on Friday, April 16th at 7 p.m. PST. A complete list of nominations is posted at www.annieawards.org/nominees.

This year’s Best Animated Feature nominations go to *Onward* (Pixar Animation Studios), *Soul* (Pixar Animation Studios), *The Croods: A New Age* (DreamWorks Animation), *The Willoughbys* (Netflix) and *Trolls World Tour* (DreamWorks Animation).

Nominated for the Best Animated Feature-Independent are *A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon*, *Calamity Jane*, *On-Gaku: Our Sound Ride Your Wave* and *Wolfwalkers*

The nominated Best Short Subject are *Filles Bleues*, *Peur Blanchem*, Miyu Productions; *KKUM*, open the portal; *Souvenir Souvenir*, Blast Production; *The Places Where We Live (Cake)*, FX Productions; and *World of Tomorrow Episode Three: The Absent Destinations of David Prime*, Don Hertzfeldt.

The Best Student Films come from the Animation Workshop, Gobelins, l’École de l’Image; Rubika; and the National Film and Television School, UK.

The Annie Awards cover 36 categories and include Best Animated Feature, Best Animated Feature-Independent, Special Productions, Commercials, Short

Subjects, Student Films and Outstanding Individual Achievements, as well as the honorary Juried Awards.



AT THE SF INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The festival runs April 9 – 18. For details about the live and streaming programs visit <https://sffilm.org/>

Shorts Program #5 features “beautifully crafted **animated shorts** that tell deeply personal stories of father-daughter relationships, impending unrest, and finding solace. These films push the form with a shockingly artful eye.”

This program includes work from Canada, Italy, France, China, Portugal, and the UK. They are *Fire Next Time*, Renaldho Pelle, UK; *In the Shadow of the Pines*, Anne Koizumi, Canada; *Sogni al Campo*, Mara Cerri/Magda Guidi, France/Italy; *Step Into the River*, Weijia Ma, China/France and *Tie* by Alexandra Ramires, Portugal.

I’m also told by a friend on their staff “There are also some great animated shorts in both Shorts 6: Family Films and Shorts 7: Youth Works. Then there are the mid length programs with *Mum is Pouring Rain + The Snail* and the *Whale + Zog* and the *Flying Doctors*.”



Cryptozoo is a 2021 American animated drama film that premiered at Sundance this year where it won the NEXT Innovator Award: The SFFilm Fest has given it their Golden Gate Persistence of Vision Award. The POV award was established in 1997 to honor artists whose main body of work is outside the realm of narrative feature filmmaking.

Cryptozoo was written and directed by Dash Shaw. Shaw is a comic book writer and animator who lives in Richmond, VA. The festival writes, “Funny, sexy, and ambitious, Shaw’s hand-drawn feature captivates a far-out story of mythological creatures and the brave souls trying to protect them from harm.” Reviews of it suggest it might develop a following. You can Google the title to see clips. It is a personal work, so don’t expect a highly polished work by Pixar.

The festival’s **closing night film** is *Street Gang: How We Got to Sesame Street*, by Marilyn Agrelo, USA, a documentary that “delves into the origins of the beloved children’s show. It includes “humor, never before seen footage, and special guests.”



40th ANIMA BRUSSELS ONLINE

12 – 21 February 2021 Brussels, Belgium

By Nancy Denney-Phelps

It is hard to believe that at this time last year we were watching cinema in the Flagey and partying together. Anima Brussels was the last live festival before the word Covid-19 became a part of our everyday lives.

The festival had a year to prepare its online edition and all of their hard work paid off. I am sure there were some panic moments behind the scenes, but everything ran smoothly for the viewers at home. Except for the five Children’s Feature Films, which were not available because their Belgian distributors are still hoping for theatrical releases, all of the films including the adult Feature Films, were available online throughout the entire festival.

One of the things that I enjoy about this festival is that since this is one of the first festivals of the year there are always films in the six Best of Shorts and It’s Belgian categories that are recent releases that I have not seen before.



One such film in the Shorts Competition was *Step into the River*, Weijia Ma's fifteen-minute film based on a story the animator heard as a child. This film is an indictment of China's one-child policy that led to some families drowning infant girls in the river at Ma's village in hopes that the next baby would be a boy.

The film is the story of Lu and Wei, two young girls living in a small village on the bank of a river who both have a special relationship with the river. One of them was thrown into the river as a baby and was saved by a village fisherman. The other girl would not have been born if her older brother had not died. He was sent down the river as was the local practice so that his spirit wouldn't haunt the village. Weijia said in an interview that this is a very political topic that adults avoid and won't talk about. She wants the audience to experience this part of China's history from a child's point of view. The film left me thinking about the value of human life, and under what circumstance does someone have the right to take a human life.



Step Into The River was first conceived when Ma was a student at The Art Institute of Chicago. The project was selected for MIFA pitching at Annecy, where she met her French producer. The film appears as a rich moving watercolor, with backgrounds drawn with toner on draft paper then scanned into the computer to do the color correction and lining before it became the final background. The animation was drawn by hand directly in the software and then combined with the background, giving it an overall beautiful effect.

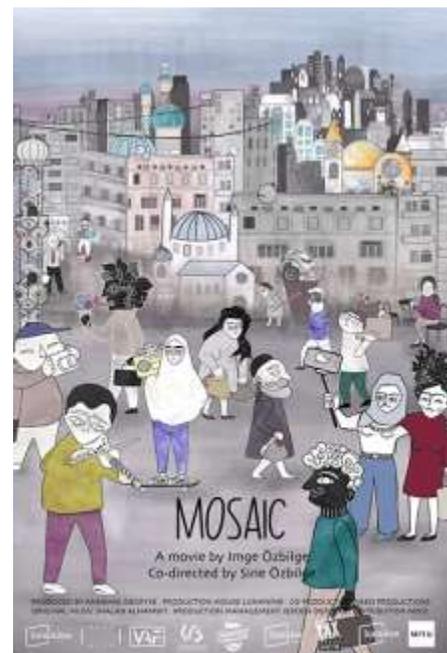
In a film based on superstition and folklore set in Russia, Dmitry Geller brings to the screen the tale of

The Mistress of Copper Mountain. Set in the Ural Mountains where there are copper mines, the miners have their own goddess, the Mistress of Copper Mountain. She watches over the underground treasures and is the keeper of the mining profession's secrets. She will not open her secrets to just anyone.

In the film, a rare emerald is found in a mine and it passes from one owner to another. It doesn't bring happiness to any of them and as each of them learns the secret of the mine, every Goddess demands her human sacrifices, .

The Copper Mountain refers to the Gumyoshevsky mine, the oldest mine in the Ural Mountains near the town of Yekaterinburg where Dmitry is originally from. The Mistress of Copper Mountain is a legendary goddess from Slavic mythology, a Russian fairytale character who in folk tales is depicted as an extremely beautiful green-eyed young woman who wears a malachite gown. She became a well-known mythological character throughout Russia after the publication of Pavel Bazhov's collection of Ural Mountains folk tales called *The Malachite Box* in 1939.

The thirteen-minute mystical thriller is made with drawn animation and cut-outs. The story is complex so it deserves a second viewing to catch all of the nuances. The film has no dialogue but the story is carried along with beautiful music. In an email conversation with Dmitry, he told me that he wanted to use composers that are associated with the film's setting as he himself is. Part of the score was written by Grigory Dulesov, a rock composer, and music for two extremely dramatic scenes was composed by the symphonic avant-garde composer Oleg Paiberdin. *The Mistress Of Copper Mountain* won the 2020 Grand Prix at the prestigious Open Russian Festival of Animated Film in Suzdal, Russia.



The two professional and one student It's Belgian programs proved that animation is alive and well here. *Mosaic*, co-directed by sisters Imge and Sine Ozbilge, challenges the viewer's perceptions of the Middle East. It shows a positive vision of cohabitation between people of different cultures and faiths.

Set in Damascus, the oldest city in the Middle East, a young Muslim Kurdish student, a violinist, and a Christian girl, her best friend, live in the same apartment building and are pieces of a cultural mosaic in the city.

The inhabitants of Damascus live in peaceful harmony until a little black cloud that has been hanging over the city expands with angry loud noises and turns into an all-consuming monster called war.

Visually the film reminds me of a Persian miniature painting that is delicate and yet complex, telling a story. *Mosaic* needs a couple of viewings to catch all of the details.

Imge and Sine were born in Turkey but think of themselves as nomads, having lived and studied in several different countries. Currently, they live in Belgium, but who knows where the wind will carry them off to next.

Mosaic won the RTBF-La Trois Award at Anima. The award guarantees the acquisition of the film's broadcast rights by RTBF, a public service broadcaster delivering radio and television services to the French-speaking community in Wallonia and Brussels.



Iza Cracco's film, *Gloria*, is a poignant portrait of a woman consumed by loss and grief. The film starts on a happy note as a couple is preparing for the birth of their first child. Gloria goes into labor as a storm rages outside. On the way to the hospital there is a terrible auto accident and she not only loses the baby but her husband is also killed.

After the accident, Gloria cuts herself off from the outside world. Slowly, with a great deal of courage, she manages to put the pieces of her shattered life back together and can move on.

The eleven-minute film has no dialogue but words are not necessary to convey the sorrow and torment that the main character is going through. With so much sorrow, loneliness, and death all around us right now it is

good to see a film that has a light at the end of the tunnel and reminds us that this too will pass.

Anyone who remembers Nicolas Keppens' previous film, *Wildebeest*, about a couple on safari in Africa, knows that he has a very strange, twisted sense of humor laced with irony. His latest film *Easter Egg* is a coming of age story set in a boring, small Flemish town. Jason is an insecure, lonely adolescent who longs for the approval of the older, cooler but just as lonely Kevin.

When Mr. Ming, owner of the local Chinese restaurant, commits suicide, Kevin and Jason hatch a plan to capture the restaurant's collection of exotic birds that Mr. Ming freed before his death. The duo figure that they can sell the birds for a lot of money. Nothing is simple or goes as planned with these two.

The fourteen-minute film is dramatic and humorous at the same time, as when Jason says "Kevin once made me drink poison. But as a joke. Then he usually cries and I get to choose what we do". When Jason gets his head stuck in a free-standing fence that stands in the middle of the Chinese restaurant lawn while searching for birds, it is funny when Kevin leaves him there during a heavy rainstorm, until he begins to feel sorry for Jason and returns to help him.

Keppens has said that the film was inspired by events from his adolescence. He grew up in a small Flemish village, had an older friend, and the baker in the village also killed himself.



Easter Egg took home The Best Belgian Short Film Award. It also has won Best Animated Short Film at Short Film Fest Leuven and it was selected for Berlinale Shorts. Sometimes crude, but always entertaining, this is a film to watch out for and so is the up and coming director Nicolas Keppens.

Real-Life Stories offered eleven diverse looks at real-life situations. In *All Her Dying Lovers* Anna Benner and Eluned Zoe Aiano investigate a story that began as a rumor during World War Two in Trebon, a town in what

was then Czechoslovakia. The story involves a nurse who contracted syphilis after being raped by an enemy soldier. To get revenge she seduces and infects numerous German soldiers. When the officers finally figure out what was happening to their men, the nurse is shot by a firing squad.

The interviews with residents of Trebon are juxtaposed with scenes of the nameless nurse going about her everyday life. All of the interviewees said that they didn't know if the story is true or not but that they had heard it all of their lives. An unknown person put up a plaque in Trebon that reads "To the girl from Trebon who fought the German occupiers".

Whether the story is true or not, the six-minute hand-drawn film is a fascinating story to me because I have attended Anifilm Animation Festival in Trebon and have seen the plaque. Since I don't speak Czech I had no idea what the memorial was for.

Maria Lorenzo Hernandez, an animation teacher at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Valencia, Spain, is a keen observer of urban culture, in particular Valencia's numerous street artists. Their vibrant mural culture is represented by such colorful names as Atilla the One, Disneylexia, and most prolific of all Chikitin, to name just three of the artists whose work enlivens the wall of the Old City, or The Gothic Center, as it is known.

Maria didn't set out to make a film of street art when she began capturing photos of the artwork on her mobile phone. Of the more than 3,000 pictures she has snapped over the twenty-four years she has lived in Valencia, 1,200 were used in the final version of *Urban Sphinx*.

Along with the obvious large murals, Hernandez sought out very small, inconspicuous pieces that artists have put in such inconspicuous places as the backs of traffic signals or abandoned buildings.

Urban Sphinx marks the first time that Maria has made film from her massive collection of images that are not her own drawings, a-la Paul Bush's *The Five Minute Museum*. All of her five previous films have been hand-drawn. In 2015 *La noche del océano (The Night of the Ocean)* was nominated for a Goya, the Spanish equivalent of the Oscars.

Since this was the 40th anniversary of Anima Brussels, a special program was shown of films close to the festival's heart and created by animators who have left their mark on the history of the festival. The list reads like the who's who in animation. The screening got off to a great beginning with Peter Lord's 1992 film *Adam* and ended in a bang with Alison Snowden and David Fine's 1993 Oscar-winning *Bob's Birthday*. Directors recorded-special birthday messages that were shown before the screening.

Valentine's Day often falls during Anima, and when it does the festival puts together a program for and about lovers of all shapes and sizes. One of my favorite affairs of the heart films is *Tiivad (The Wings)* by Estonian

Riho Unt based on the correspondence between a fictional character in a book, inventor Jaan Tatikas, and the Renaissance genius Leonard da Vinci. Tatikas was created by Eduard Bornhohe who is considered a pioneer of the Estonian historical novel. What begins in the film as Tatikas' desire to fly turns into a love triangle between Jaan, his beautiful wife Liisa, and Leonardo. While Jaan is trying to fulfill his dream of flight his neglected wife might be the one who flies away.



Riho is a master of puppet animation and is a versatile storyteller. From extremely humorous films like *The Wings* and *Mary and the Seven Dwarfs* to his unsettling and realistic animation *The Master* which won a Special Jury Award at Annecy in 2015, Riho can do it all. His award-winning 2005 film *Brothers Bearhearts* about three brothers Henry, Vincent, and August who are artists in Paris is one of my all-time favorite films.

One of the funniest films that I have seen in quite a while is *Cockpera* in the Balkans Now! Program. Kata Gugic's short film was inspired by Aesop's fable *The Fighting Cocks and the Eagle*. It is an "opera" set in a hen house. A tenor and a baritone rooster vocally duke it out in grand operatic style for the affections of the soprano hen until the fight is settled by an entirely different species of predator. What can you say about chickens singing opera? It's as funny as the Bugs Bunny/Elmer Fudd opera scenes. The four-minute hand-drawn film was created while Kata was a student at The Academy of Fine Arts, Zagreb.

All eight animations in the Balkans Now! program were very strong. In *Prelazak (Passage)* Serbian animator Igor Coric deals with the ever-present tensions and memories of war in the Balkans. The main character in the seven-minute film is a boy who tries to flee a war zone with members of his clan. He survives the horrors of war but the rest of his relatives and neighbors are killed. The boy decides to get revenge by standing up to the enemy armed with a totem that he builds out of his clan's decomposing remains, a strategy that takes on an unexpected twist.



Marco Djeska's *All Those Sensations in my Belly* is an autobiographical film narrated by Matia Anna Plese, a person who is mentally a woman born with a man's body. In the thirteen-minute film, Matia Anna relates some of her experiences such as violent treatment by her classmates, the rejection of her best friend in high school when she discovered Matia Anna's secret, and older men who were sexually curious. Matia Anna finally has come to terms with himself and the realization that he doesn't have to prove anything to anyone. He is a woman.

Matia Anna talks frankly about what it means to be a transsexual. Using 2D animation combined with rotoscoping, Djeska treats his subject honestly using such vivid imagery as representing a group of hostile men as a pack of wolves, and there is a disco scene that is a riot of color. *All Those Sensations in my Belly* is a joint Croatian/Portuguese production.

This year the Anima Focus country was Korea, celebrating Korean Independent filmmakers. Two of the feature films that were part of the focus were among the most bizarre films that I have seen in quite a while. I loved them both.

Motel Rose is directed by Eun-a Yeo. Behind all of the glamour of a big city with fancy shops and tall buildings, there is a red-light district where the Motel Rose is located. Mina, a middle school girl, takes a job there as a cleaner during her school holiday to help support her family. There she meets Hannah, a girl who is obsessed with a pop singing idol named Rose, whom she resembles.



Hannah sells herself at the Motel under the name Rose, and being the youngest and most beautiful girl at the brothel, she is a big hit with the men who fight over who can pay the most money to be with her. The other "girls" at Motel Rose are jealous of Hannah/Rose and angry that she has stolen their clients. The beautiful Hannah doesn't plan to be a prostitute all of her life and dreams of being a real superstar.

Being the only person near Hannah's age, Mina becomes friends with her and eventually wants to look and act like Rose. Everyone's dreams and desires go up in smoke and no one lives happily ever after or gets out alive.

The seventy-seven-minute film has every perversion anyone could possibly imagine short of bestiality. There is the sleazy client who tells Rose that he is an influential agent who will make her famous. The brothel owner's son drills holes in the ceiling of the girls' rooms so he can watch them from the attic while they are at "work". Lust and envy abound everywhere in *Motel Rose* and I ended up having no sympathy for anyone in the film.

As strange as *Motel Rose* was, it was nothing compared to *Beauty Water*. Director Kyung-hun Cho's first feature film is a horror/thriller as well as a commentary on the murderous lengths that people will go to to be beautiful.

Ye-ji has been fat and ugly all of her life, ridiculed at work for her appearance and told by her parents that she will never get a husband. After being publically shamed on social media, Ye-ji discovers Beauty Water.

The instructions are simple: 1) mix Beauty Water and water in a 4 to 1 ratio, 2) submerge your face and body in the liquid for twenty minutes, 3) sculpt your face and body. Ye-ji is suddenly drop-dead gorgeous with the perfect face and body. The modeling jobs pour in and she thinks she has found the man of her dreams until the side effects of Beauty Water kick in and everything starts to unravel in a murderous plot twist that I didn't see coming.

The film is adapted from a popular webcomic, *Tales of the Unusual* by the cartoonist Seong-dae. If you like good horror films that are well animated and have lots of plot twists and turns this is the film for you. I loved both *Beauty Water* and *Motel Rose* and want to get the DVDs because these are the perfect films to show at movie nights with friends once we are allowed to have friends again.

Animated Nights is always a fun time at the festival, starting late in the evening and going until the wee hours of the morning. Normally there are three programs that show films that are submitted to the festival but not selected for any other program. Usually, the screenings are broken up into three parts with an intermission in between each segment when a band plays and the festival bars are open and there is a pajama contest on

YOU WILL DISCOVER A LOT OF NEW WORLDS AT GLAS

stage. I especially missed Mistress of Ceremonies Stephanie Coerten's lovely outfits and looking forward to seeing what she would be wearing during the pajama contest. Stephanie was on camera during the opening and closing ceremonies; she also moderated some of the Futuranima but it wasn't the same as having her onstage introducing the programs and filmmakers, and being a bubbly presence like a glass of good champagne.

This year with everything online we could watch all of the programs in our pajamas and didn't have to go any further than our kitchen for a drink, but somehow Animated Nights wasn't the same without all of the laughter, catcalls and general silliness. Putting on a CD between programs just wasn't the same as listening to the live band and hanging out with friends.

Futuranima is designed for the Belgian animation industry to connect and share information about the current state of Belgian animation, current trends, and projects underway at various studios.

Instead of being held in three intense, fully packed days as usual during the festival, the lectures, Q and A's, and roundtable discussions on zoom took place over five days with three events per day.

Topics ranged from the exploration of possible links between animation and video games by using video game engines to create animated films, to a discussion on how remote working during the pandemic is affecting the animation industry. There was a virtual visit to four Belgian studios- Beast Animation, Dream Wall, Lunanime and Enclume, as well as a session with a group of independent animators who talked about balancing life and work at home during the lockdown and what projects they are working on.

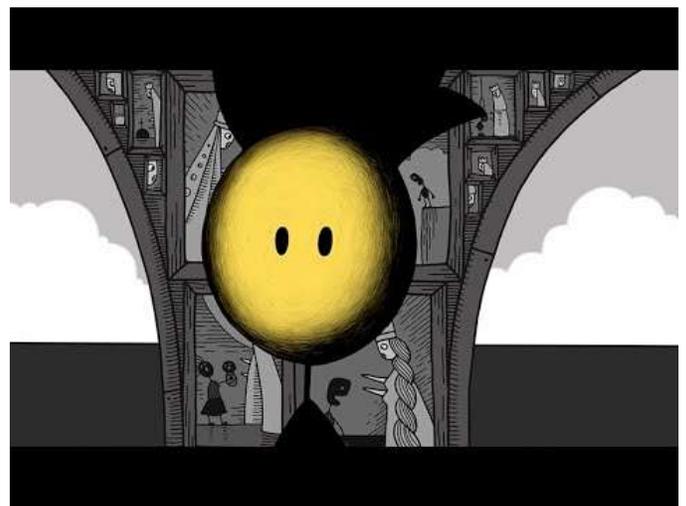
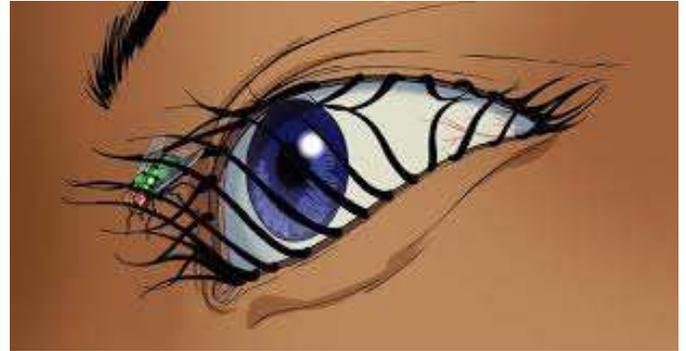
Congratulations to Anima Brussels co-directors Karin Vandenrydt and Dominique Seutin - you did a wonderful job under extremely difficult circumstances and kudos to all of the hard-working Anima staff.

I missed seeing so many people that I normally have a drink with while catching up on the latest news, and discussing the films. I hope that we will all be back at the Flagey for the 2022 edition of the festival. The next edition will be from 25 February to 6 March 2022.

If you want to learn more about Anima Brussels go to: www.animafestival.be

BETSY DE VOS' RECORD ON STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS As of April 30, 2020 150,545 student loan borrowers had applied for forgiveness. About 147,000 had been rejected and others were pending. Of the approved applications, 74% of the borrowers work for the government and 26% work for non-profits.

The *Guardian* reported employees who reviewed the applications had to examine 5 forms an hour. The applications were about 100 pages long. That means they had about 12 minutes to review each application and make a decision.





**ANIMATED ADVENTURES AWAIT YOU
AT GLAS - ONLINE ANIMATION FESTIVAL**

NOW BEING PLANNED, 3D PRINTED HOMES!

Stop-motion animators know what 3D printing can do (faces, sets, props, etc.), but I had no idea the technology could be used to build houses. The 15 printed homes planned for Coachella Valley, CA will consist of multiple bedrooms, bathrooms and a pool, designed in a mid-century modern style. They will start in price at \$595,000 for a 3BR, 2BA, 1,450 sq. foot house. The houses are being created by Mighty Builders in Oakland, CA and financing has been established.

There are low income family houses being built in Mexico (started in 2019) and a project in Austin Texas is about to start construction.

ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION

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ASIFA-SF is a chapter of: **Association Internationale du Film d'Animation** with over 40 chapters around the world. Membership is normally \$21 a year with the e-mailed newsletter, but right now we have a **COVID 19 SPECIAL OFFER Due to the lockdown we are only asking \$11 a year while the virus lasts. Let's hope it is a limited time offer. We want to hold in-person events again.**

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