

The National Film Board of Canada, in collaboration with ASIFA San Francisco, present the following selection of this year's NFB shorts, filmmaker creative process.

see the films online

4 North A; Altötting; I, Barnabé, and The Great Malaise



Jordan Canning and Howie Shia directed '4 North A'

Andreas Hykade directed 'Allotting'

Jean-François Lévesque directed 'I, Barnabé'

Catherine Lepage directed 'The Great Malaise'

TO VIEW THE FILMS AND CREATIVE PROCESS VIDEOS

vimeo.com/showcase/7910198

password: NFBanimation



A rare photo of the mysterious Vince Collins, taken about the time when he won the Student Academy Award

Take a tour of Vince Collins' 'The Old Animation Shop' It is full of amazing things not sold anywhere, I guarantee it! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tDCyyMzrUI&feature=youtu.be>



From Vince's *Unofficial Reality*, 2005

“A frank and unflinching look at the debauched and depraved aspects of modern life.”

A HAPPY NEW YEAR ANIMATION BY GARY SCHWARTZ AND THERE IS MORE OF HIS WORK AFTER IT Gary teaches animation in Detroit. https://youtu.be/ccRhUv_ISno



ANIMACRACKER'S DELIGHTFUL NEW SHORT 'THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES' IS NOW ONLINE Director Mark West say, "It is our fond homage to *Fractured Fairytales*" and it certainly captures the fun spirit of J. Ward's classic series. It was created by Mark West and Barbara Bayne who have been active members of San Francisco's animation community for several decades. (415) 695-9105 animacrackers.com <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yT6MdEju5o> Their short *Chicken Little* can be seen on Apple Books at

<https://books.apple.com/be/book/chicken-little/id1033707670>

DID YOU SEE 'GOOBYE DONALD TRUMP' THAT WAS MADE FOR 'THE JIMMY KIMMEL SHOW'? HOW WAS IT DONE? I asked Steve Segal who replies, "This looks like it uses a variety of techniques, some motion capture, some keyframe animation (like Pixar) and a fair amount of bones on lattice (to make a painting or drawing move around). Pretty impressive for a show that's on every night. But obviously they knew it was coming and felt it was worth the extra effort. Plus, they have a reasonable expectation it will go viral."

If you missed it here is the link.

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=444349766933874&id=1641767806100315



10 ANIMATED SHORTS WILL BE FEATURED IN The 23rd Annual San Francisco Independent Film Festival The virtual event runs every day from February 4 to the 21st and the shorts are part of the *SHORTS 1: In My Secret Life* program. The shorts include *Metro6* by Geoff Hecht, from the Bay Area; *GNT* by Sara Hirner from Australia; *Sad Beauty* by Arjan Brentjes, Netherlands; *Each and Every Night* by Julie Roberts, France; *The Parrot Lady* by Michalis Kalopaidos, Cyprus; *The Wind* by Miranda Javid, U.S; *Disappearing Pathways* by Michael Covetto and three more films from the U.S. and the United Kingdom.

STEVE SEAGAL'S 'MISFITS' WAS IN 'BASH' BASH is the Bay Area Short Film Festival 2020 (although it is now 2021). It was shown online Jan. 22.

HAVE FUN EXPLORING THE ZIPPY FRAMES WEBSITE It is a rich variety of short films by independent animators from Europe and worldwide. Several categories are on view (2D, 3D, stop-motion, music videos, children, etc.), festival information, news and a lot more. <https://zippyframes.com>



ANOTHER WEBSITE WORTH EXPLORING.

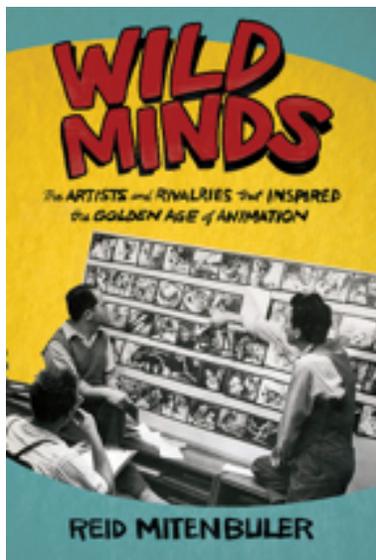
www.HandDrawnFilm.com



RON DIAMOND'S ANIMATION SHOW OF SHOWS Lots of really great animated films from the past on DVDs are for sale at reasonable prices. When you visit Ron's website click on the DVD covers to see a short clip of the film. Box sets are available. There are 3 films on each DVD and each disc is only \$7.95, shipping is free! Also these are excellent quality prints. <https://www.animationshowofshows.com/pages/educational-events>



TOMMY STATHES WHO RESTORES AND SHOWS RARE SILENT CARTOONS HAS A NEW KICKSTARTER CAMPAIGN He has launched a new campaign to fund the restoration of 15 early Walter Lantz films from the Bray Studio. The stars include Dinky Doodle, Hot Dog and Pete the Pup. There are also some Unnatural History titles thrown in. The films feature a young Lantz acting with his animated characters. The promo video is quite interesting as are the promos for his other videos he has completed on DVD and Blu-Ray. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jP2AwwdGHw>
https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/tommyjose/cartoon-roots-dinky-doodle-and-co-blu-ray-and-dvd-combo?ref=creator_nav



‘Wild Minds: The Artists and Rivalries That Inspired the Golden Age of Animation’ An article about this book says, “In 1911, famed cartoonist Winsor McCay debuted one of the first animated cartoons. Based on his sophisticated newspaper strip *Little Nemo in Slumberland*, itself inspired by Freud’s recent research on dreams, McCay is largely forgotten today, but he unleashed an art form, and the creative energy of artists from Otto Messmer and Max Fleischer to Walt Disney and Chuck Jones at Warner Bros. Their origin stories, rivalries, and sheer genius, as Reid Mitlenbuler skillfully relates, were as colorful and subversive as their creations—from Felix the Cat to Bugs Bunny to feature films such as *Fantasia*—which became an integral part and reflection of American culture over the next five decades.”

“Pre-television, animated cartoons were aimed squarely at adults; comic preludes to movies, they were often ‘little hand grenades of social and political satire.’ Early Betty Boop cartoons included nudity; Popeye stories contained sly references to the injustices of unchecked capitalism. ‘During its first half-century,’ Mitlenbuler writes, ‘animation was an important part of the culture wars about free speech, censorship, the appropriate boundaries of humor, and the influence of art and media on society.’ During WWII it also played a significant role in propaganda. The Golden Age of animation ended with the advent of television, when cartoons were sanitized to appeal to children and help advertisers sell sugary breakfast cereals.”

“*Wild Minds* is an ode to our colorful past and to the creative energy that later inspired *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, and *BoJack Horseman*.”

That review is somewhat exaggerated praise, but it should help sell copies and build an interest in animation’s remarkable past. Hopefully some people will actually go online and discover that some of the works are exceptional.

One friend said he was told the book contains numerous over simplifications, and questionable or false facts. While there may be questions raised about the author’s scholarship, I think flawed works are welcome works if they create interest in the largely forgotten animators of the past. I’m glad it is getting excellent reviews. KC



“[A] lively history of the first half-century of animation . . . In his prologue, Mitenbuler suggests the story he’s about to tell will go from rude to rarefied, but one of the most fascinating things about the history he recounts is that animation, like so much of American culture, continually scrambled all sorts of categories and expectations. The arc of *Wild Minds* is appropriately weird, full of high-flown aspirations and zany anecdotes.”—**Jennifer Szalai, *New York Times***

“*Wild Minds* assembles its history with love and a sense of occasion . . . The book’s governing idea lies in its heroes’ collective intuition that animated films could be a vehicle for grownup expression—erotic, political, and even scientific—rather than the trailing diminutive form they mostly became . . . All art aspires to the condition of music, a wise man said once, and perhaps all cultural history aspires to the condition of a cartoon: a seeming fluidity of movement, made up of countless small stops and starts.”—**Adam Gopnik, *New Yorker***

“*Wild Minds* is a colorful chronology of the first 50 years of American animated film. Juicy tales abound about the films and the wildly imaginative people who made them. Mr. Mitenbuler tells their stories with relish and clarity.”—**John Canemaker, *Wall Street Journal***

“Superficially, *Wild Minds* is about the origins of Mickey Mouse, Popeye the Sailor and Bugs Bunny cartoons. But Mitenbuler’s real target is a quintessentially American story of daring ambition, personal reinvention and the eternal tug-of-war between art and business . . . While animation would rise again to find its place in our own era of the long-running *Simpsons* and the glorious works of Hayao Miyazaki, Mitenbuler’s book is a gem for anyone wanting to understand animation’s origin story.”—**Adam Frank, NPR**

“*Wild Minds* is a thoroughly captivating behind-the-scenes history of classic American animation, full of breezy stories of the great artists who went crazy making the brilliant cartoons we all know and love. A must-read for all fans of the medium.”—**Matt Groening, creator of *The Simpsons* and *Futurama***

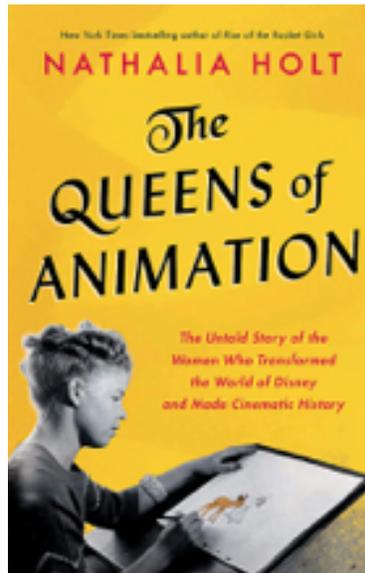


THE IRONIC STORY ABOUT ONE OF THE MEN ON ‘WILD MINDS’ COVER That is Dave Hilberman on the left, a man Walt later grew to hate for being part of the strike in 1941. The other two are his co-partners Zachary Schwartz (center) and Stephen Bosustow discussing the storyboard for *Sparks and Chips Get the Blitz* (1943). Their tiny company, Industrial Film and Poster Service, became UPA in 1946, a company that would become famous in the 1950s for its great modern looking, award winning theatrical animation.

Dave was one of the people who asked fellow workers to join the union that was being formed by a team of people. Walt believed he was one of the strike’s main organizers so in 1947 he called him and two other people “Communists” at a House hearing (HUAC). Walt could not accept that workers had the right to form a union and perform legal union activities. Walt calling Dave a commie resulted in him being blacklisted about 1953, when a major right wing columnist wrote a column that said why was Dave allowed to stay in business when Walt had identified him as a communist? Enough sponsors withdrew giving their commercial jobs to Tempo, Dave’s company, that he had to go out of business. Tempo was doing ads for Fortune 500 corporations including Standard Oil and there was nothing subversive about his work.

In the late 1960s he created the animation program at SF State and taught there for several years. I’m glad I got to know him and I find it ironic that he is on the cover of a book with a photo taken after the strike when Walt openly hated him. . . In a talk at SF State for students and ASIFA-SF members, Dave said “Walt was a wonderful producer, but he was also a real s.o.b.”

COMING IN YOUR EMAIL IN MID-FEBRUARY Marty McNamara has written *A LOOK BACK AT 2020 ANIMATION FESTIVALS* for ASIFA-SF members. It is a large well-researched and written report.



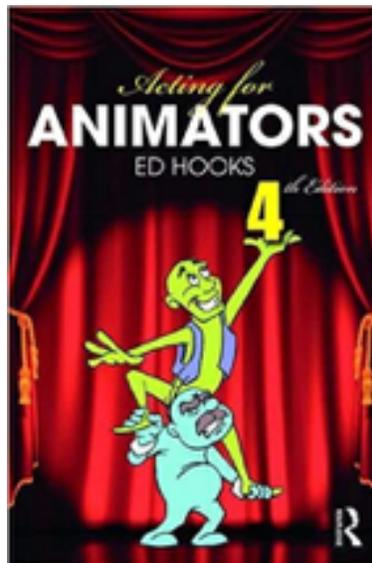
"Nathalia Holt's richly detailed group biography shines a welcome light on Disney's true heroines--not the princesses on the screen, but the **talented female artists and writers working hard behind the scenes**. *The Queens of Animation* is also a crisp reflection on Hollywood's charged and changing relationship with beauty, race and fame."—**Margot Lee Shetterly, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Hidden Figures***

"Nathalia Holt has a deeper, more important motive for revisiting classics...Marshaling scrupulous research, the author makes the case for the role played by female studio employees in bringing to life those classic films...This book scores for telling us something new about the films we thought we knew so well."
—**Peter Tonguette, *Wall Street Journal***

"Gripping, galvanizing reading...A beautifully sculpted narrative of hurtlingly fast pace...invaluably researched...A bolt of pure reading delight that outdoes even Holt's utterly winning earlier book *Rise of the Rocket Girls*...Holt has told the story of indispensable trailblazers."—**Steve Donoghue, *Christian Science Monitor***

"A gripping corrective...Nathalia Holt ushers these animators and story developers into the limelight...Few know of the company's female virtuosi, who from the 1930s on injected nuance into characters from Bambi to a panoply of princesses."
—**Barbara Kiser, *Nature***

"A remarkable true story, unforgettably told...Holt has unearthed a **vivid, soaring, vitally important untold story** of women's contribution to technology, entertainment, and art."—**Lisa Mundy, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Code Girls***



CHECK OUT ED HOOK'S BRAND NEW ACTING FOR ANIMATORS WEBSITE The exciting news is that he and his wife Cally have been self-producing instructional videos in their home office, which they have rigged up with bright lights and such. They just launched the site so take a look: <https://edhooks.uscreen.io/>

Today lots of animation training programs offer some form of Acting for Animators, but none teach formal, classical acting theory the way Ed does. He has created a certain skillset to do that. He says most "Acting for Animators" classes are really just another name for mentorship. ("If you want your character to appear surprised, do this with the eyebrows...") He goes a lot further including acting theory, basic concepts and a lot more information which is why he has been invited to lecture at hundreds of studios and schools since 1996.

So far Ed and Cally have completed 15 "modules" on the website and they are adding two more modules each month. They just recorded a new one on Character Analysis that will be ready for posting shortly. Take a look at his site and see two different videos that introduce what he is up to. There is also a store for his books on acting.

Ed was the very first person to create acting training especially for animators. Back in 1996, when he first started teaching the animators at PDI/DreamWorks, there was no such thing as Acting for Animators. Back then, if animators wanted to learn about acting, the advice was that they should "take an acting class". Those kind of classes are for stage and movie actors, not for animators, most of whom have no desire to personally be on stage or stand in front of a camera. Ed was the person that applied formal acting theory, Stanislavski and Aristotle to animation.

Ed has built an impressive following over the years. Here is what Pixar's Brad Bird has to say about Ed's work. "By looking outside the medium itself, and by intelligently and thoughtfully examining character animation from an actor's perspective, Mr. Hooks has made a valuable contribution toward deepening our understanding of it."

Due to Covid-19 Ed has not been traveling the world over to teach his Acting for Animators classes, but he has found a way to teach using Zoom. He finds that teaching two 3-hour sessions on Zoom, ideally on consecutive days, works. He says "It's still hard, but it's doable."



DISCOVER REALLY 'FAR OUT' FILMS by KC Long before Tim Leary was encouraging people to "Turn on, tune in, drop out," animators were turning on their creative minds and taking audiences on amazing trips. Perhaps the most wonderful trips were voyages into outer space and into secret worlds inside our planet. Now you too can take those trips thanks to websites like YouTube and Vimeo. When you are ready to relax and enjoy mind traveling click onto a few of these great animated gems.

The first great visionary adventurer was Georges Méliès. His *Trip to the Moon* from 1902 is still a delightful work that showed what was possible before animation was even invented. He was a stage magician who fell in love with the magic of cinema. A hand colored restored print of his classic film can be seen at <https://www.rogerscitytheater.com/discussions/a-trip-to-the-moon/>

In America James Stewart Blackton, a part-time stage magician who had a day job as a reporter, fell in love as did Georges Méliès, with the movies when he was assigned to write an article on Edison's latest invention, the movie camera. After Edison invited him to his studio and made a film of Blackton drawing a fast sketch, Blackton not only bought a camera and projector, he ended up opening Vitagraph in 1898. His company grew to become America's first major film producer of live action films of all kinds including newsreels.

Around 1900 Blackton made a film of himself doing *The Enchanted Drawings*. It included his drawing in fast motion a bottle of wine and a glass, but suddenly he put his hand over the drawing and removes a real bottle filled with wine and pours some into a real glass. It wasn't drawn animation and Blackton went on to other live action projects after that. He returned to drawing in 1906 when he starred in *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces*. It is the first known example of a film that includes drawn animation (animation where the drawing moves by itself and we do not see the artist drawing it). Blackton experimented a little further with animation, but while the films are historically important they are not great. He had a company to run so he didn't have time to become America's first great animator.



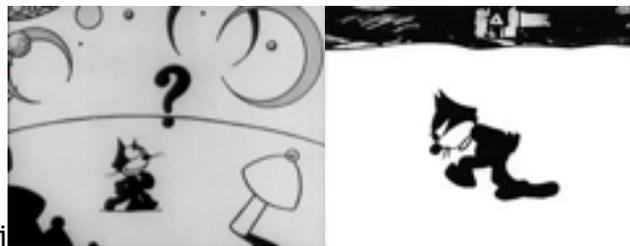
The man that earned that honor was Winsor McCay, a successful and very well paid newspaper illustrator who did elaborately drawn comic strips and editorial cartoons. McCay's fascination with doing animated stories led him to create attempts in 1911 and in the following year that were shown as part of an act he did in vaudeville theatres. They were minor hits, but in 1914 he created what we now consider a milestone in animation, *Gertie the Dinosaur*.

To prove his work was drawn and not a fancy live action magic trick, he created an enormous extinct creature. The film opens with a live action prologue that explains how he created Gertie. Then we see a drawn landscape and him coaxing Gertie to come out of her cave to do a few tricks. She not only shows off her skills, she also expresses emotions when she cries. We also learn she is tame enough to give Winsor a ride. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32pzHWUTcPc>

McCays realized that to captivate and excite an audience he needed to continue doing outrageous tall tales. His subsequent films included a topless female mythological centaur and a four legged pet that grows into a monster that begins to destroy New York City before the military attacks it. *Dreams of a Rarebit Fiend: The Pet* (1921).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s39jimMyAFI>

McCay's last film was *The Flying House*, 1921. In it a man turns his house into a flying machine and flies to... Expect the unexpected as it can and will happen. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obnRKhgRFXA>



The next great explorer of the medium was Otto Messmer who created Felix the Cat. He was the silent screen's greatest star and one of his adventures *Astronomeous*, 1928 is a wonderful adventure into space, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxWnSzeF2ng>

Part of Felix's charm was his ability to express his thoughts and feelings. Before creating Felix, Otto had animated a series of 12 authorized Charlie Chaplin cartoons. Chaplin had sent the studio photos of key poses that expressed different emotions so Otto learned to become an expert in showing his characters emote what they were thinking.



In the early 1930s a few cartoons were full of mind blowing images. Two Betty Boop cartoons, *Minnie the Moocher*, 1932 and *Snow White* 1933, will take you into a different kind of world, caves full of mysterious goings on, set to Cab Calloway's music. Cab's world included mentions of cocaine in his lyrics so years ago, on two different occasions when I was interviewing two former Fleischer directors, I asked if the animators had much knowledge of the use of drugs. Both Shamus Culhane and Myron Waldman told me that when these cartoons were made they had no understanding of the drug reference in the lyrics. Shamus said when he was at the studio during the last days of prohibition they were being daring by drinking bootleg. Myron depicted the average studio employee as a young talented guy fresh out of high school who was making enough money to dress well including wearing spats on their shoes, and having enough money to pitch in and help the family get by (it was during the great depression). On weekends they drank and played cards with their girlfriends. Myron also made a point to let me know that he was more mature as he had been to college so he didn't hang out with the young guys.

As you watch *Minnie the Moocher* (1932) there are several subtle details to you might look for. We know Betty's father is an Orthodox Jew as he is wearing a skullcap (known in Hebrew as a kippah or in Yiddish as a yarmulke). There is a nude woman in the film, a statue on the newel post of the stairway. You barely notice her until she pulls up her costume. That is a subtle pre-code touch.

The walrus that dances is based on live action footage of Cab Calloway dancing. The footage was traced over on a rotoscope machine, a system Max Fleisher had invented. He applied for the patent in 1915.

One verse of Minnie tells us "She messed around with a bloke named Smokey, She loved him though he was kokey (cocaine). He took her down to Chinatown, and he showed her how to kick the gong around" (smoking opium).

Minnie the Moocher was rated as number 20 in Jerry Beck's book *The World's Greatest Cartoons* (1994). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7VUU_VPI1E



The second Betty Boop has her cast as the star of *Snow White*, 1933. It was rated as number 19 in Jerry Beck's book *The World's Greatest Cartoons*. (1994) <https://www.openculture.com/2020/10/watch-a-surreal-1933-animation-of-snow-white.html>

As wonderful as Betty Boop's two films made with Cab Calloway's music are, there is another that may be as great or even be greater, *Bimbo's Initiation*, 1931, animated by Grim Natwick. In 1994 it was voted #37 in Jerry Beck's book *The 50 Greatest Cartoons* of all time. <https://vimeo.com/398409879>

This article will continue next month with works by Walt Disney, Harmon-Ising, Bob Clampett, Tex Avery and Chuck Jones. The third part will highlight more recent animators including films by Sally Cruickshank and Vince Collins.

THE LA ANIMATION COMMUNITY HAS ONCE AGAIN HONORED ARTISTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD WHO HAVE PASSED ON This year's Afternoon of Remembrance, held on Sat. January 30th, was held at noon on Zoom with animators from around the world talking about their deceased friends. Tom Sito has helped organize the annual In Memoriam event for many years. WB is Warner Bros. and HB is Hanna Barbera. Michael Angelis- British voice actor. Thomas and Friends.

Roman Arambula- Animator, Walt Disney, Hanna & Barbera, Filmation.
Kelly Asbury- Story artist, director, Disney, Dreamworks, Tim Burton, Sony.
Julie Bennett- Voice Actor, Jay Ward, Hanna & Barbera.
Doris Bergstrom- Assistant Animator, Filmation, HB, WB, Disney.
Patricia Blackburn- Checker, HB, Filmation, Rich.
Cullen Blaine-Houghtaling- Director, DePatie-Freleng, Simpsons, WB, DTV.
Denise Blakely-Fuller - Layout, Vis Dev, Disney, Pixar, Sony Rhythm & Hues.
Kobe Bryant - NBA star who wrote and narrated ***Dear Basketball***.
Alfred Budnick - Background artist, Hanna Barbera, Filmation.
Marge Champion - Dancer, model for Walt Disney's Snow White.
Curtis Cim - Storyboard artist, H&B, Filmation, Warner Bros, Universal.
Ron Cobb - Designer, Illustrator, Lucasfilm, Walt Disney.
Doug Crane - Animator, teacher, Terrytoons, Osterman, HB, Filmation, Nickelodeon.
Maureen Crane - inker, assistant. Terrytoons.
Nicola Cuti - Background artist, designer, Marvel, Graz, Universal.
Bill Davis - Animator, designer, PBS Reading Rainbow, CBS Storybreak.
Jason Davis - Voice Actor, Disney's Recess.
Gene Deitch - Award winning director- Terrytoons, UPA.
Tomie diPaola-Childrens Book designer, illustrator, Stregna Nona.
William Dufres - Voice Actor, Bob the Builder.
Tony Eastman - NY Animation director, storyboard artist, illustrator.
Jim Finch - animation checker, Disney TV, H&B, Filmation.
Robb Gibbs - Storyboard Artist, Director, Kroyer Films, Bakshi, Disney, Pixar.
Mark Glamack - animator, director, Walt Disney, Filmation H&B, Film Roman.
Danny Goldman - Casting director, Smurfs, Robot Chicken.
David Hemblen - Actor. Voice of Magneto on X-Men.
Bud Hester - Walt Disney Assistant Animator, Union Business Agent.
Derek Hill - promoter of animation in England, he was 89.
Ian Holm - actor, voice of Chef in ***Ratatouille***.
Jim Houston - Software engineer, part of the Disney CAPS Team.
Jim Janes - Storyboard artist, Marvel.
Blair Kitchen - Storyboard artist, Blue Sky, Looney Tunes.
Bill Knoll - Assistant animator, Timing Director, WB, DTV, Marvel.
Helen Komar - NY Assist animator, Paramount, WB, Ostermann, Bakshi, MTV.
Hana Kukal - Canadian Animator, director, Kroyer Films, WB, Dreamworks.
David Lander - Actor, voice of Oswald, Henry the Penguin.
Nancy Lane - NY Ink&Paint Supervisor, Production- Perpetual, MTV, Ostermann.
Ro Marcenaro - Italian animation producer, director.
Louis Mendoza - Mexican voice artist of Warner Bros characters.
Vatroslav Mimica - Award winning Zagreb filmmaker.
Maureen Mlynarczyk - Emmy winning director, The Cleveland Show, Adventure Time, Disenchantment.
Francisca Moralde - Cel Service, Disney, HB, Kroyer Films.
Sue Nichols - Maciorowski, Storyboard, designer, Walt Disney, Turner.
Kumiko Okae - Voice Actor, ***Pokemon***.
Dominic Orlando- Storyboards, Nickelodeon, HB, Ruby-Spears.
Joan Orloff - Ink & Paint supervisor, Disney, Filmfair.
Juan Padron - animator, The Walt Disney of Cuba.
Martin Pasko - writer, Warner Bros.
Lisa Poitevint - Animation Checker for Walt Disney Feature Animation.
Anatoly Prokhorov - founding father of Russian animation.
Helen Reddy - Singer, Walt Disney.
Nik Rjgersberg - Canadian Director, Storyboard, Little Lulu, ***For Better or Worse***.
Cesar Romero - Stop Motion costumer, Screen Novelties.
John Rooney - Canadian Producer, Chorus Kids, Wild Brain, Teletoon.
Pam Ross - Production manager Jumbo Pictures, NY.
Joe Ruby – Writer Producer, Disney, H&B, Ruby-Spears.
Adam Schlesinger - Musician, songwriter for SNL ***TV Funhouse***.
Gary Schumer - editor, teacher, Walt Disney Orlando, Ringling College.

Jerry Slick - Sound designer, *Sesame Street*.
 Ed Smith – Animator, The Ink Tank, Hubley Studio, Storyboard Prod.
 Ken Spears - Writer Producer, H&B, Ross Bagdassarian, Ruby-Spears.
 Norm Spencer - voice actor, Cyclops in X-Men.
 Herbert Stott - Animator, Walt Disney, Spun Buggy.
 Marty Strudler - Background, Layout, DePatie-Freleng, Bakshi, HB, WB.
 Ann Sullivan- Ink & Paint, Walt Disney, H&B.
 Rudy Tomaselli – Founder, CelArt Productions NYC, MTV animation.
 Tuck Tucker - Animator, Director, Disney, Filmation, Nickelodeon.
 Albert Uderzo - French Cartoonist, designer of Asterix.
 Pino Van Lamsweerde - Belgian director, designer. *Heavy Metal, White Fang*.
 Phillip Walsh - Writer, SD Ent, Disney.
 Fred Willard- Voice Actor. Walt Disney, Pixar, Simpsons, King of the Hill.
 David Wise - Writer Hanna –Barbera, Filmation, Walt Disney, Warner Bros.
 Paul Williams - directed four made-for-TV animated features (teofilms).

AUSTRALIAN ANIMATED TV FEATURE STARRED “PRESIDENT TRUMPHORN” WHO WAS AS EVIL AS YOU KNOW WHO The film is *The Island on Nevawuz* directed Paul Williams who died last year. In 2017, the Melbourne International Animation Festival wrote “here is a film made in 1978 that features a ‘President Triumphorn’ who goes about the task of destroying the world at the same time as he promotes his Trumpburgers and more. Screened around the world, *The Island of Nevawuz* portrays an overblown American tycoon, J.B. Triumphorn, who takes over a lost, medieval island. He beguiles the locals with promises of "economic reforms" but, from his skyscraper penthouse, destroys their environment all the while marketing Trump Oil, Trump Metal, Trump Marts and Trumpburgers." Williams’s other features are *The Black Planet* (1982), *The Phantom Treehouse* (1984) and *The Steam Driven Adventures of Riverboat Bill* (1986).

<https://www.ozflix.tv/#!/search?query=Paul%20Williams>



30th ANIMAFEST ZAGREB
28 September to 3 October 2020
A LIVE FESTIVAL IN THIS WORLD OF CHAOS

This year against all odds I found myself in Zagreb, and not just there, but on the Grand Competition International Jury. When the invitation came to participate in the festival, I just couldn’t turn it down; Animafest is one of my favorite festivals every year. I knew that the organizers would take every precaution to keep us safe, and they did, along with providing hand gel at the entrance, every person’s temperature was taken before entering either of the two theatres.



This year’s film selection was extremely strong with well put together programs. One of my favorite films was *Ties* by the Russian animator Dina Velikovskaya. The film is a personal story about leaving home and for the first time it used a unique

animation technique. It is the first animated film made entirely with a 3Doodler pen and wire. The story of a young girl who wants to go out into the world and how it almost causes her parents' lives to unravel. It is a story everyone can relate to. It came out of Dina's move to Germany, leaving her parents behind in Russia. The film looks beautiful and the story is so touching that I am sure *Ties* will be as big a hit as her two previous films, *About A Mother* (2015) and *Kukuschka* (2016).

Piotr Dumala's films are often dark and upsetting but never boring. The Polish animator has a true genius for telling powerful stories without a word spoken. His *Crime and Punishment*, 2000, goes right to the heart of the unconscious mind of a killer in this tale of love and obsession without a single word being uttered.

In 2014 Dumala created *Hipopotamy*. Although I have seen it many times and its impact has not lessened, this unsettling film about male violence still makes me angry. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uMi4K007gc>

His latest film *Last Supper* also has an unexpected and chilling twist at the end that left me thinking about it long after the last frame of the film. In Piotr's contemporary take on one of the most famous artworks in the world, Leonardo Da Vinci's Last Supper, Jesus and the apostles are seated at a table on a train. It is dark outside and the men are moving to the rhythm of a string quartet. The beautiful piece of music was composed by Sebastian Ladyzynski. The apostles vanish one by one until you just see Jesus and Judas Iscariot clutching a bag with his thirty pieces of silver. After Judas disappears, leaving Jesus on the train, the viewer suddenly realizes where the train is going.

There were so many excellent films this year that could have easily won the Grand Prix. The Grand Competition jury had tough decisions to make. The jury was composed of programmer Clemence Bragard from France, Hungarian animator Reka Bucsi, Zagreb media artist and director Vladislav Knezevic, Italian animator Martina Scarpelli, and me.

After extensive discussion, we decided to award the Grand Prix to Shoko Hara for *Just a Guy*. The animated documentary is about women who fall in love with serial killers on death row. This is a very real phenomenon. The film focuses on three women, including Hara herself, who wrote to the notorious serial killer Richard Ramirez, known as The Night Stalker while he was on death row in San Quentin prison. From June 1984 to August 1985 Ramirez drove up and down the freeway from Los Angeles to San Francisco randomly breaking into homes, killing at least fourteen people of both sexes, raping and torturing at least two dozen more. The film focuses on the women who fall in love with death row convicts and is not about the crimes or the murderers themselves.

After Ramirez was sentenced to death, he had an enormous number of female groupies and one woman actually married him. The film focuses on two women, the Death Rock star Eva O. and Shoko Hara's friend Sarah. Shoko was convinced to write to Ramirez once out of curiosity and naivete by Sarah, who was sexually obsessed with Ramirez. After he wrote her back, Shoko realized she had made a mistake. The film doesn't point a finger at all of the women who wrote to him but tries to understand what motivated them to want to write to him.

The title, *Just a Guy*, comes from how Ramirez referred to himself. The fifteen-minute film uses collage, archival footage and Claymation. Shoko explained "To emphasize the different layers of subjectivity, we used different animation techniques. I chose Claymation for the past, when the protagonists talk about their memories, to visualize that memories are not clean but smeared, milky, and reduced to the essentials. Clay enables (the animator) to squeeze or stretch the object unlike rigid stop-motion objects or puppets and it also looks like wet skin which I really liked and found a bit ugly as well. The puppets . . . were used for the present and therefore have a certain realism".



Puppet from *Just a Guy*

The director has also put together a small paperback book with reproductions of the actual letters in Ramirez's handwriting that he sent to Sarah and Eva O. There is also a reproduction of the one letter Shoko received but never answered. They make for chilling reading. The documentary and letters were particularly interesting to me because I was living in San Francisco at the time of the murders and I remember the fear that gripped the city until he was apprehended. He committed one double murder of an elderly couple just a few blocks from my house.

A special program paid tribute to Pavao Stalter, one of the masters of the famous Zagreb School of Animation. Eight films were shown from this prolific animator's long career which spanned from 1958 to 2015. Included in the program is my favorite among Pavao's films, *The Fifth One*.

In the 2 ½ minute film four members of a string quartet play together in harmony and repeatedly reject a fifth player who tries to join in with his tuba. After several attempts of trying to play with them, the tuba player is taken off the screen and a shot is heard. The quartet begins to play again, then the tuba player returns with a bandage on the front of his hat. He starts to play his bass notes and the other members of the quartet join in to his beat, giving up and bowing to the inevitable. The film is a metaphor for persistence leading to social change.

At a special presentation twin brothers Milivoj and Veljko Popovic presented three new projects that they and their crew at Prime Render Studio in Split, Croatia are working on. The first is an animated feature film titled *Snovozemlje (Dreamworld)*. The movie is still in the scripting stage and scriptwriter Pedro Rivero joined the brothers on stage. Pedro is

known for his direction of such classic films as the animated feature *Psiconautus, the Forgotten Children* and the Goya Award winning *Birdboy*. He also co-wrote the screenplay for the live-action Spanish hit film *The Platform* which can currently be seen on Netflix. I am looking forward to seeing what Pedro and the Popovic Brothers come up with, it is bound to be interesting.

The brothers then went on to present their animated VR project *Dislocation*. In the project when you put on the glasses you become a refugee fleeing from war, poverty, or any of the other tragic situations that force someone to leave their homeland. They also talked about the challenges of turning an animated VR installation into a classic animated film. While at Animafest the Popovic's received the exciting news that *Dislocation* had received the award for best VR film at the Ottawa International Animation Festival.

The final project is a 2D animated film which is an adaptation of the eponymous book by Split author Tisja Kljakovic Braic. This project is in the very earliest stages with no release date as of yet projected.

Prime Render, formerly named Lemonade, is a multi-award winning studio that has created such films as *She Who Measures*, *Planemo*, and the multi-award winning *Cyclists* which won Best Croatian Film at Animafest in 2018 and was a Vimeo Staff Pick.



Pedro Rivera, Milivoj and Veljko Popovic

WTF Anecy was one of the most fun screenings this year. The weird, wacky, violent, and/or politically incorrect films were put together by Sebastien Sperer, a member of the Anecy Film and Programming team. WTF was part of Animafest's salute to Anecy's 60th Anniversary this year. It included such gems as *Farce* which is described in the catalogue as "a man, a woman, and a meat grinder". In the Norwegian film by Robin Jensen a reindeer herder has his herd stolen along with the woman he loves. He gives chase and accidentally ends up amidst the thieves in the big city where he discovers a world where meat from questionable sources is served in a restaurant while rape porn is produced in the basement.

It is interesting to note that *Obverse and Reverse* was the only film in the "WFT" program made by a woman. The eight-minute film was created by Barbara Rupik, a student at the Polish National Film School in Lodz. She describes her film as "The other side of a picture that hides a parallel world. The two worlds are constantly intertwining and interacting with each other". That sounds harmless enough but there was plenty of blood and gore. The salute to all things gory and gross was held at night in the outdoor bar which meant that there was plenty of beer and wine to help the gore go down smoothly.



One of the highlights of Animafest every year is an excellent exhibition curated by Paola Orlic. The Master of Poetic Visions retrospective at the Kranjcar Gallery paid tribute to this year's Life Time Achievement Award winner Georges Schwizgebel. In a career that spans nearly half a century, he has created nineteen films. He still sticks to the technique that he used to create his first film *The Flight of Icarus* (1974) using paint on foil, which he often combines with pastels, gouache, acrylics, or cutouts.

When asked what are the main influences on his work, he immediately said music first, then movement and image, and then narrative at the end. When you watch his beautifully crafted films it is evident that classical music is his great inspiration, replacing dialogue in his animations with music. He has said that "I enjoy expressing myself without dialogue. It is a means of communication accessible to all." Although Georges does not play any instruments himself, his son, Louis Schwizgebel-Wang, is an award-winning classical pianist. In 2011 Louis performed the music along with his sister Tina on the cello for Georges's film *Romance*. For the 2015 film *Erlking*, Louis also played the Schubert and Liszt score.

The exhibition consisted of sixty paintings, drawings, and sketches selected by Georges as the most representative examples of his work. Thirty-four were images from 13 different films while the remaining paintings and sketches were from *Erlking*. The official opening of the exhibition coincided with Georges' birthday and there he was surprised and honored with a large birthday cake from the festival.



Georges was surprised with a birthday cake

Last year the festival inaugurated a Behind the Scenes exhibition, a making-of group exhibition of works from films in the Grand Competition Short Film Screenings. Each of the twelve participants could contribute up to five pieces from their film which provided a broad selection of artwork. They ranged from classical paintings, sketches, drawings, prints, puppets, and set parts to installations, and multimedia presentations.



I was particularly happy to see artwork from *The Adventures of Gloria Scott – Murder in The Cathedral*. The film is set in early 20th century London where the ‘famous’ detective Gloria Scott and her faithful companion Mary Lambert are spending a quiet evening in their office. Then, an unknown murderer kills Professor Janson on their doorstep. A new adventure awaits them as they search for the murderer, including a visit to a Chinese restaurant, a cathedral, a wax museum, and the discovery of a great conspiracy.

These female versions of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson were created by Croatian writer Mima Aimi, who along with Croatian screenwriter Jasna Zmak wrote the screenplay. Directors Maija Pisacic and Tvrtko Raspolic have developed the characters into a beautifully designed film and Gloria and Mary made me laugh every time I looked at them. Visually the backgrounds are full of interesting details and beautifully executed. There are also some very funny in-jokes. *The Adventures of Gloria Scott* is the title of a Sherlock Holmes adventure by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In Doyle’s story, the Gloria Scott is a ship bound for Australia that blows up. *Murder in the Cathedral* is the title of T. S. Eliot’s verse dramatization of the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. Pisacic and Raspolic created *Murder in the Cathedral* as a pilot project for a series, and I hope that they succeed because I would love to see more of the two ladies’ adventures.

Augmented Reality App, a group exhibition by students of the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts, was sponsored and created in collaboration with the digital agency Masinerija. It was implemented as part of the first-year course Multimedia Exercises and Techniques in Animated Film in the graduate program of animation, taught by artistic director Daniel Suljic. To see the seven short animated projects, you looked for the stickers with the illustrations located around the festival site, scanned the QR code and downloaded the app.



Zagreb Studio Exhibition

I was fortunate enough to visit the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb to see the Imagination to Animation: Six Decades of Zagreb Film exhibition. The multimedia exhibition is dedicated to works created by animators working in the famous Croatian film company, founded in 1953. In the nearly seven decades of its existence, the studio has produced more than two thousand animated, documentary, educational, and feature films as well as commercials. The studio is also the birthplace of what has come to be known as the Zagreb School of Animation that has won more than 500 awards. Most notable of these is the Academy Award won by Dusan Vukotic in 1962 for his film *Ersatz (Surogat)*. This was followed by three other Oscar nominations: *The Game (Igra)* by Dusan Vukotic (1964), *Tup-Tup* by Nedeljko Dragic, (1973) and finally in 1980 *Dream Doll (Lutka Snova)* directed by Zlatko Grgic and Bob Godfrey. The renowned studio also garnered numerous awards from festivals.

Along with presenting a selection of films, the exhibition contains drawings, sketches, and cels from The Studio for Animated Film which was founded in 1956 as part of Zagreb Film. They also have original equipment from the studio such as a complete camera, ink and paint station, and a camera dolly.



Paola Orlic and me at the Botanical Garden (Photo Paola Orlic)

Unfortunately, due to the restrictions of social distancing this year, the festival could not put the guests on a bus to drive us an hour outside of the city for the traditional picnic. The creative festival staff came up with a lovely alternative. As a group, we walked the few blocks from our hotel to the Zagreb Botanical Garden where we were met at the entrance by a docent who took us on a tour of the beautiful gardens. Being avid gardeners, Nik and I were especially delighted to have the opportunity to see some of the 10,000 species of plants on display. I also learned that Croatia is one of the richest European countries in biodiversity. The garden was founded in 1889 and covers five hectares.

Our tour ended at the recently restored Red Pavilion where a delicious picnic awaited us. The botanical garden was the perfect place for relaxed conversations over food and drinks. Music was provided by Velko and Milivoj Popovic and Nik.



Veljko, Nik, and Milivoj entertaining at the picnic

When planning the festival, the organizers, artistic director Daniel Suljic, along with festival producers Matea Milic and Paola Orlic not only had to contend with the pandemic but also had to deal with both an earthquake and a flood. The earthquake

damaged the original festival site in March and a new location had to be found, so there were definitely changes in the works.

The new location, The University of Zagreb Student Center, had some advantages as well as some drawbacks. Unlike past years when events were held in different locations, all screenings could be held in one place because there are two theatres at the student center. Among the drawbacks is that it is located a bit away from the center of town and, although the student center has a bar with a very nice and efficient bartender, there aren't any restaurants nearby.

Animafest Scanners Symposium, held in conjunction with the festival annually, was entirely online this year. Scanners brings together filmmakers and scholars to examine theoretical and practical approaches to animation. The sixteen speakers at the 7th edition delivered papers on three topics: *Animation in the World of Chaos*, *Women in Animation*, and *Animation and Poetry*. The keynote address was delivered by Chris Robinson, Canadian animation researcher and Artistic Director of the Ottawa International Animation Festival. Chris was also the recipient of this year's Animafest Zagreb Award for Outstanding Contributions to Animation Studies. One thing that remained unchanged was the quality and number of films, over 300 of them! The festival got off to a rousing start with the opening night ceremony. After we were welcomed by Milana Vukovic, Head of the City Department of Culture of the City of Zagreb; Peter Marcich, Head of the Croatian Audiovisual Center; and Daniel Suljic,



L-R: Margit Antauer (Buba), Georges Schwizgebel with his lifetime achievement award, and his wife Yaoing Wang
Marta Milic and Paola Orlic, the Animafest Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to the renowned Swiss animator Georges Schwizgebel, who was on hand to receive his award in person. The recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award is selected each year by the Animafest Council. Presenting the award to Georges was Margit Antauer, President of the Council. Margit, better known as Buba, noted that he is the most awarded animator in the festival's history with seven awards and three special mentions.

Chris Robinson accepted his award for Outstanding Contributions to Animation Studies via the internet. The award for The Best Animation School this year went to the Polish School of Film, Television, and Theatre in Lodz.

The special presentations were followed by a screening of the first International Competition program. My belief that Daniel Suljic is one of the best animation programmers was once again born out.

The week literally flew by and all too soon it was closing night. Following the closing ceremony, we all went to the Arts and Crafts Museum where we danced until the wee hours of the morning.

I had such a wonderful week at Animafest. After being locked down for so long it was great to be watching film on a proper screen in a theatre with lots of friends. A special thank you goes to our jury minder Matilda Fatur, who made sure that we were in the right place at the right time and always seemed to know when I needed a glass of red wine. A very big thank you goes to Daniel Suljic, Paola Orlic, and Matea Milic for inviting me to be a member of the jury and treating me like royalty. Last but not least, a thank you goes to the numerous volunteers who were always on hand and eager to answer questions or help in any way that they could. Now I am at home again in lockdown and it looks like I will be for the foreseeable future but it is so lovely to have memories of my week in Zagreb to get me through these dark days.

Next year the festival will take place from 7 to 12 June. I am already looking forward to being there. You can find out more about this year's festival and how to submit your film at: Animafest.hr

AN ARTICLE BY Bill Desowitz PUBLISHED BY INDIE WIRE THAT I HOPE YOU WILL ENJOY

‘Wolfwalkers’ Ross Stewart and Tomm Moore

Influencers: The childhood friends have spent years perfecting their vision of bringing Celtic mythology to life through gorgeous animation.



“Wolfwalkers” co-directors Ross Stewart and Tomm Moore

As co-founder of Irish animation studio Cartoon Saloon and director of the Oscar-nominated Celtic folktales, “The Secret of Kells” (2009) and “Song of the Sea” (2014), Tomm Moore has become the most prominent hand-drawn creator since Hayao Miyazaki. His secret weapon: art director and childhood pal Ross Stewart, who ascended to co-director on this year’s “Wolfwalkers,” the final film in their trilogy about preserving Ireland’s cycle of life.

Moore and Stewart immediately hit it off in grade school in Kilkenny (the current home of Cartoon Saloon). That’s when they competed in a draw-off to see who could make the better Batman. When Stewart won, Moore knew instantly that he was an artist to be reckoned with. “He always had a strong sense of graphic design,” Moore said. “We had been friends for so long that it was natural to work together on ‘Secret of Kells.’ We were like Beavis and Butt-Head.”

“What I love about working with Tomm is we share the same visual taste, and if you came up with an interesting idea, he would say to push it further, let’s go as far as we can,” added Stewart, who has been able to leverage his own experience as a painter and fine arts enthusiast to expand the look of their movies. “Tomm would never say an idea was too crazy. He was as energized as I was in pushing animation as far as we could [at Cartoon Saloon].”



“Wolfwalkers”

After studying animation together in the ‘90s at Ballyfermot College in Dublin, the duo dreamed of one day becoming part of the Studio Ghibli of Ireland, which they’ve accomplished at Cartoon Saloon, partnering with indie distributor GKIDS and Apple TV+ as co-producer of “Wolfwalkers.”

“Ross and I were really into comics and self-published [one] with friends in the ’90s, and the original idea for what was to become ‘The Secret of Kells’ was cooked up around then,” Moore said. “We could never do it as a school project, and, in the end, we got some financing in 2000 from the Millennium Arts and Culture Project. We were in pre-production for several years until it came together at Cartoon Saloon [as a French/Belgian co-production]. It was a crazy journey.”

“Kells” follows 12-year-old Brendan, who lives in an abbey and helps complete the sacred “Book of Kells” — Ireland’s most precious religious artifact — as a defense against the invading Vikings from the north. It’s a coming-of-age story full of mystical forest-set wonders, overcoming oppression, and achieving a liberating sense of individuality and artistry. Moore and Stewart thought it would be exciting to translate that into 2D with a hand-made aesthetic inspired by medieval stories and legends of the period.



“The Secret of Kells” Cartoon Saloon

The pair got a printed copy made of “The Book of Kells” manuscript from Trinity College, which Stewart studied and applied as the basis of the shape language for the movie, including its emphasis on spirals, which formed Brendan’s cape. They envisioned a pop-up book style of animation, which would carry over throughout

the trilogy. But it was important to stay true to the Celtic shapes found in “The Book of Kells” as much as possible; that’s where they found coherence as well as historical accuracy.

And yet they also needed to find a style of their own, and that’s where Stewart excelled. He depicted life in the abbey for Brendan as flat and dull in his drawings, whereas the scenes in the magical forest were colorful and bright, full of dreams and flashbacks. And this contrasted with the darker scenes involving the battle with the Vikings, which had the look of a horror film.

Be sure to check out our exclusive video essays, focusing on Stewart, Moore, and their shared body of work, below.

Influencer Videos

“Looking back on this now, any part that we used technological advances, like putting textures into Photoshop, [seems] rudimentary,” Stewart said. “I think that ages faster than any of the hand-drawn [animation], which is more timeless. Which is why for ‘Wolfwalkers’ we wanted to get inspiration from [the line drawings in] ‘101 Dalmatians’ and films not dependent on technology.”

While Moore took inspiration from classic animation, Stewart offered a more intuitive approach, based on art and nature. “We came to a place where he was able to [work in] where the watercolors and looseness made sense and where the more structured drawing made sense,” added Moore. “I think he brought a broader language outside the animation world into the movie, with texture and color, painting the Irish landscape, quite abstract and quite stylized. It was his personal way of seeing the countryside.”

But the biggest influence was Richard Williams’ “The Thief and the Cobbler,” a complex animated adventure that was in and out of production for three decades. “We were prepared to be studio-ready with the basics of animation, and I think when we saw ‘Thief and the Cobbler,’ it showed there was so much more than what we had learned,” said Stewart. “We tried to get a little of that in ‘Secret of Kells,’ playing with optical illusions in fl at 2D space and pushing it out in terms of visual language.”



Song of the Sea” Cartoon Saloon

After “Kells,” Stewart took time off to paint and do visual development on Laika’s second stop-motion movie, “ParaNorman,” helping with a naturalistic roadmap inspired by the Pacific Northwest. This prevented him from art directing Cartoon Saloon’s sophomore movie, “Song of the Sea,” a mash-up of rough pencil design and watercolors about saving the mythical Selkies (half-human and half-seal creatures). But even though Stewart’s protégé, Adrien Merigeau, collaborated with Moore on the period piece, Stewart still found time to consult on the look of its underwater world.

Stewart then got his first chance to co-direct the “On Love” segment of the animated anthology, “Kahil Gibran’s The Prophet,” alongside Moore. “I was busy on ‘Song of the Sea’ and it was a good test run for ‘Wolfwalkers,’ which we were already planning,” said Moore. “It was freer than anything we’d done, and it

was a good chance to experiment with [expressive lines and geometric patterns].”

With “Wolfwalkers,” the duo achieved a hand-animated tour de force, building on what they had accomplished in the earlier features while boldly taking it further stylistically. It’s a mystical adventure about saving the hunted wolf population of Kilkenny in the mid-17th century, when Ireland was under the control of Oliver Cromwell (The Lord Protector). English apprentice hunter, Robyn, befriends the free-spirited Mebh, who lives in the forbidden woods outside the Puritan town, and is a member of the mysterious tribe of shapeshifting wolfwalkers.



“Wolfwalkers” AppleTV, GKIDS

“Wolves are important to Irish folklore,” Moore said. “They are associated with the countryside and with human transformation. As teenagers, both Ross and I were familiar with a story of the wolf people of Ossory. We borrowed [some of that mythology] but took our own artistic license. The wolf was seen as a person and a partner, an apex predator, rather than a monster, that we had to fight against, and that was really inspiring to us.”

Thus, “Wolfwalkers” provided the perfect opportunity for Moore and Stewart to not only extend their collaboration as co-directors but to also expand their hand-drawn aesthetic. They were both passionate about the empowering story and visual opportunities, which stretched their imaginations and skills. The result: “Wolfwalkers” is their masterpiece of Celtic mythology and the importance of preserving Ireland and its indigenous beauty.

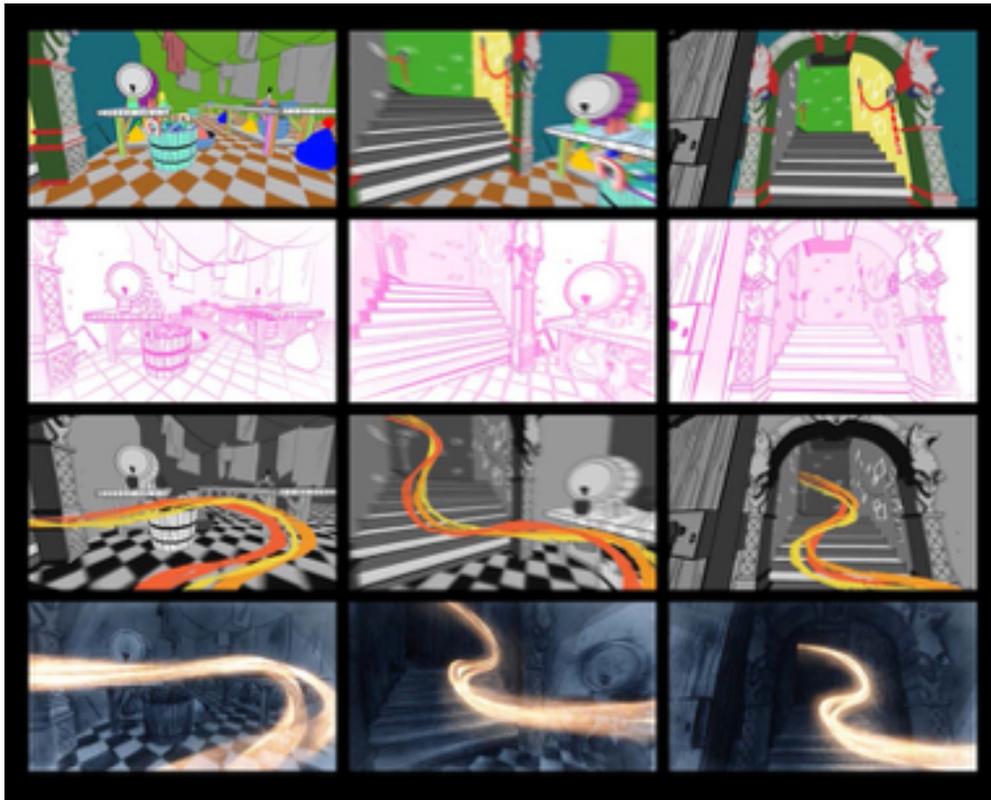
While it took Stewart a couple of weeks to get a better handle on the other departments (including story and layout), his experience as a musician made him adept at giving notes on the score to composers Bruno Coulais and Kila. And Stewart’s maturity as a painter and art director enabled him to achieve more expressive line work.



“Wolfwalkers” AppleTV, GKIDS

“Wolfwalkers” became a game-changer for this dynamic duo. The two worlds were divided between the rigid lines associated with the town, and the looser curves of the lush, autumnal forest with large oak trees where Mebh lived. “Very early on, we knew that the town had to represent a cage for Robyn because the Lord Protector had a tight rule over society,” said Stewart. “And so we looked at the old woodblock prints of the 1600s with black lines and aggressive mark making and lots of horizontals and verticals. And it seemed appropriate to merge that into the style of the town. In contrast to that, the forest had to be free and energetic in outlook. The forest had to embody that wild energy that the wolves have.”

“Ross had a very specific vision for making it look like an Irish forest [with orange oak trees and green vegetation behind it],” Moore added. “Even if it’s a scribbly oak tree, he’d show the artists that it had to have a certain shape with the leaves and the bark. It wasn’t an ordinary cartoon tree.”



“Wolfwalkers” concept art for “wolfvision”

The boldest innovation, though, was conveying Robyn’s POV when she transforms into a wolfwalker herself. They called this “wolfvision” and it was achieved in collaboration with Irish animator and director Eimhin McNamara of Paper Panther in Dublin. Wolfwalkers are people that possess a spiritual connection with the wolves and roam among them at night as avatars. And wolfvision, according to Moore, was “an attempt to show how the world appears to wolves, with a limited palette but heightened colors and expressive styles for scents and sounds. This final style uses a much more three-dimensional camera than our previous projects.”

“We knew we had to do something really immersive, like a roller coaster ride,” added Stewart. “And it had to be a visual representation of a scent. It was an impossibility, really, but Eimhin has this amazing approach to traditional media, working with oil paint on glass and papercut animation. We treated it like a three-minute short film and his small team handled it [at Cartoon Saloon].”

The early design of the trees and landscapes were done as camera flythroughs in VR, but the final effect was a hyper-real experience that helped Robyn tap into her inner wolf. “She can never go back to the 2D, flat, oppressive, cage-like town,” Stewart said.



“Wolfwalkers”

Although Moore and Stewart rarely disagreed, there was one heated exchange about Robyn’s falcon companion, Merlyn, that became almost embarrassing. It was the only time that their aesthetics were not in sync. While Moore wanted Merlyn to talk, Stewart found it too distracting, preferring a more realistic bird.

“Tomm had the idea that the Merlyn should be a cartoony sidekick that would have human expressions and be able to communicate with her,” Stewart said. “That seemed totally wrong to me. We live in a world where they’re distinct. I remember for two hours we wouldn’t even talk to each other, and all the people around were like: ‘It’s just a bird.’”

“I wanted Merlyn to have more expressions,” added Moore. “I could see in one sense that you don’t want it to feel like every animal in the movie might be a person who’s transformed into the animal. And [Ross] also had a very specific vision for the bird. I don’t think I would’ve had the same understanding of how those birds move.

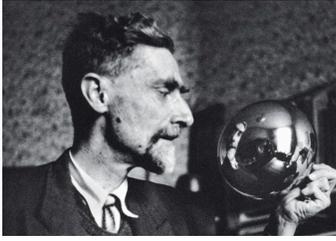
Behind the scenes on “Wolfwalkers” with Tomm Moore and Ross Stewart

For a while, there was a standoff. They were like an old married couple who had known each other since they were 11. But then, finally, a breakthrough. “We sat down and found a compromise,” Stewart recalled. “Tomm said, ‘Let’s pull back the expressions so they’re not totally cartoony, but let’s give Merlyn the capability to have some [bird-like] expressions.’”

It’s the kind of compromise indicative of both the pair’s bond and their individual strengths — Moore as a cartoon geek and Stewart as a naturalistic artist — and how they are better animation filmmakers as a result of that unique partnership. —*Bill Desowitz*

Here is a late item, Steve’s review of the new Escher feature and my plug for it plus an hour documentary of Escher that I really enjoyed

<https://eatdrinkfilms.com/2021/02/08/the-camera-is-eschers-eye/?fbclid=IwAR3G3W5P3lwFuQzljD93IVAFomKHRmmNYje7y89Ppqa5tn3IVEvjElq76Ek>



The Camera Is Escher's Eye

“



PART-ANIMATED DOCUMENTRY ABOUT ESCHER'S WORK M.C. Escher: Journey to Infinity opened in March at virtual cinemas in the Bay Area (Roxie, Rafael, Rialto and Elmwood).

“Succeeds where so many documentaries about artists fail: It provides real insight into the art. It’s a welcome trip for those fascinated by his iconic, mind-bending depictions of illusions, evolutions and eternal cycles... Lutz judiciously uses animation to extend Escher’s works or bring them to life to illuminate the artist’s intent, such as his quest to depict infinity. That’s risky stuff, so boldly interpreting someone else’s art (writes the critic), but Lutz pulls it off with aplomb.” *L.A. Times* review)

“Escher apparently did not understand why his “cerebral and rationalized” work found favor with the freewheeling 1960s counterculture — which was, in its own blissed-out way, also concerned with infinity.” (*N.Y. Times* review) <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/escherdoco>

This is also an exceptional hour long documentary about M.C. Escher' life produced by CINEMEDIA in co-production with Nederlandse Programma Stichting (NPS) and Radio Netherlands Television (RNTV) in 1999. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4VAxilTRGs>

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 our dues are only asking \$11 a year while the virus lasts. Let's hope it is a limited time offer???**

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