

JULY 2024



HENRY SELICK ANNOUNCED AT ANNECY THAT HE IS DEVELOPING 'THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE' WITH NEIL GAIMAN. HE ALSO PLANS TO REVIVE 'THE SHADOW KING' AS A GRAPHIC NOVEL Henry Selick was at Annecy with Neil Gaiman promoting their working on *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* as their next feature project. Selick calls Gaiman's 2013 novel his crowning achievement, and envisions the film as a companion piece to their *Coraline*. In the new project, "Instead of a child going to this other world with a monstrous mother, it's a monstrous mother who comes into our world to wreak havoc on a kid's life," Selick is now shopping the project around, hinting at interest from "Guillermo del Toro's studio ShadowMachine."



Opening in August

Selick also hopes to revive his shuttered project *The Shadow King*. He revealed his plans to initially release his original vision as a graphic novel in order to spur interest and act as a proof-of-concept for an eventual film he might offer to another director. Selick screened five minutes of nearly finished footage that he completed when he produced the ill-fated project at Pixar in 2011. See a clip from that project at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6DKu3pAkJg>



'INSIDE OUT' HAS OPENED IN WHAT HAS

TRADITIONALLY BEEN ONE OF THE BIGGEST WEEKS OF THE YEAR TO OPEN A FEATURE

It proved the tradition lives on. It opened to a massive \$155million worldwide on the Father's Day weekend. The box office experts thought it might make \$90m. It was the second largest opening weekend for an animated film ever. It also did historic business overseas, where it opened to a record \$140m for a global total of \$295m. The *Hollywood Reporter* said "the biggest opening of all time for an animated film in like-for-like markets when accounting for exchange rates." At the end of its 2nd week the world wide gross had reached \$724 million. The *Hollywood Reporter* thinks it will cross the billion dollar mark before the 4th of July!

Variety said, "It's worth noting the increasing importance of Annecy in building up hype for theatrically released animated films. Three sequels likely to contend for highest grossing release of 2024 – *Inside Out 2*, *Despicable Me 4* and *Moana 2*."

Things look great for *Inside Out 2*'s success. The following Tuesday it grossed \$29.1m, the biggest Tuesday ever for an animated film and the eighth-biggest among any film. The *Hollywood Reporter* wrote, "2024's first big blockbuster put Pixar back in the game, pulling in a surprisingly diverse audience of different ages and ethnicities."

SEE SIX 'INSIDE OUT' TRAILERS https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKFB_NoPKu0

FIRST TRAILER FOR ADAM ELLIOT'S MEMOIR OF A SNAIL [Memoir of a Snail - Official Teaser \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKFB_NoPKu0)

THE CARTOON ART MUSEUM PRESENTED ANIMATOR/ CARTOONIST JOE SIKORYAK TO THEIR FOLLOWERS

In June the Cartoon Art Museum invited people to meet Joe Sikoryak. Joe is the creator of the comics memoir series *When We Were Trekkies*. Joe's creative career includes stints in graphic design and filmmaking as well as serving as art director for the likes of *Comic Book Marketplace* and *Film Score Monthly*. He

strives to tell stories that are visually rich and emotionally compelling with a positive message. You can learn more about Joe at joesikoryak.com.

Joe Sikoryak's graphic memoir series *When We Were Trekkies* serves as a love letter to the early days of pop culture fandom. Prior to today's big corporate-sponsored marketplaces, sci-fi and comics fans were often left to their own devices when it came to putting on gatherings, from getting the word out to wrangling special guests. *When We Were Trekkies* pays homage to that coming-of-age era and celebrates the passionate DIY spirit of fans everywhere.

ASIFA АСИФА

WHAT IS ASIFA TODAY? THE ANSWER IS EXPLAINED IN An ENTERTAINING VIDEO It's a delightful compilation of ASIFA chapters around the world. I was surprised to see myself in it (photos taken after I received the ASIFA lifetime achievement award back in 2003 in Ottawa. Fortunately, I'm still kicking, working on a long article on animated films related to the Holocaust. <https://vimeo.com/951382514> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMuZi56UQKg> After the video you can continue watching other cool shorts.



INSIGHTS FROM PEOPLE IN THE ANIMATION

COMMUNITY

The third and final essay written by noted historian, author, and educator Karl Cohen to bring awareness to the present state of indie animated shorts and to stimulate a discussion that might lead to improvements; we conclude with a collection of well-thought-out comments from members of the animation community.

[Insights from People in the Animation Community I](#)
[Animation World Network \(awn.com\)](#)



SEATTLE'S BUMBERSHOOT FESTIVAL HAS A NEW ANIMATION DISTRICT Now in its 51st year, the iconic arts and music festival adds a stellar lineup of animated fare for 2024 that includes in-person presentations by *Nimona* director Troy Quane, *Ultraman: Rising* director Shannon Tindle, *Across the Spider-Verse* VFX supervisor Mike Lasker and production designer Patrick O'Keefe. There is also a Big Fake Deep Foot competition, and a host of installations and screenings as part of a robust Visual Arts program happening around the Seattle Center Campus on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1.



IS THIS AD BLATENT JUVINILE SCATOLOGICAL HUMOR?

Google: [Sausage Party: Foodtopia - Official Trailer | Prime Video \(youtube.com\)](#)



BAD BUNNY AND WILL FERRELL ARE MAKING

'DROPZ,' ONE OF FIVE NEW PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT AT PARAMOUNT ANIMATION, At

Annecy Paramount Animation and Nickelodeon announced their original films in development including the Bad Bunny and Will Ferrell-produced film *Dropz* and a *Swan Lake* adaptation. Also in the works is *Muttnik*, a sci-fi comedy about a sweet puppy turned “Han Solo-type space bandit.” He is forced to return to the family on Earth that abandoned him. Ron Howard, Brian Grazer and Zareh Nalbandian are producing.

Another project is *Once Upon a Motorcycle Dude*, which is a “fairytale disrupter” in which a kick-ass princess teams up with a post-apocalyptic motorcycle dude to save their kingdom. Karen Rosenfelt is producing. The studio’s *Swan Lake*, is a modern retelling of the classic fairy tale of the same name, which will be written by Kourtney Kang (*How I Met Your Mother*) and produced by Temple Hill. The last new project in development is *Yokai Samba*, a ‘*The Last Starfighter*’ “destination movie to Brazil.” Previously announced projects in development include *Real Pigeons Fight Crime*, based on the comedic book series written by Andrew McDonald and illustrated by Ben Wood; and *Superworld*, based on the book series by Yarrow Cheney and Carrie Cheney.

Paramount Animation previewed a work in progress at Annecy, footage from *Transformers One*, “a stylized origin story set on Cybertron about how Optimus Prime (voiced by Chris Hemsworth) and Megatron (Brian Tyree Henry) went from friends to enemies. It’s directed by Josh Cooley, an Oscar winner for *Toy Story 4*.

Transformers One opens Sept. 20 in the U.S. [Transformers One - Official Trailer | 2024 | Hasbro Pulse \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Paramount will release on Feb. 14, 2025 *The Smurfs Movie*. Also slated are “*The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants*” opening Dec. 12, 2025; *Aang: The Last Airbender*, Jan. 30, 2026; *Paw Patrol 3*, July 31, 2026; and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2*, Oct. 9, 2026.

**A WEBSITE TRYING HARD TO BE FAR OUT, TRIPPY
AND EXPERIMENTAL**

Called *BEAF* <https://thebeaf.org>

It has the potential to do some creative programing
Their 2023 festival is online here: <https://www.youtube.com/live/S0ZBo9WSIYA>

DRFEAMWORKS AND CHRIS SANDERS' 'THE WILD ROBOT' SET TO PREMIER IN TORANTO The world premiere will be at the 49th Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), September 5-15. The film is about a robot that is shipwrecked on an uninhabited island and must learn to adapt to the harsh surroundings. It is based on Peter Brown's bestselling illustrated book of the same name. The film will be released into U.S. theaters on September 27.

SEE CLIPS AND TRAILERS FOR SEVERAL DISNEY KIDS TV SHOWS <https://www.awn.com/news/disney-branded-television-reveals-greenlights-first-looks-annecy>

'MOANA' TRAILER (DISNEY) Film will be released this fall. <https://www.indiewire.com/news/trailers/moana-2-teaser-trailer-1234971627>

SKYDANCE ANIMATION'S 'WONDLA' TRAILER It premiered on Apple TV+ on June 28. <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/series/first-look-at-skydance-animations-wondla-241374.html>

Skydance Animation is going to produce a feature with Oscar-winning filmmaker Don Hall. Hall's work for Disney included *Big Hero 6* and the original *Moana*. He will create, develop and produce an original animated feature. No details are available yet.

LAIKA TO ADAPT 'PIRANESI' FANTASY NOVEL AS UPCOMING STOP-MOTION FEATURE Laika's Travis Knight will direct an adaptation of Susanna Clarke's best-selling fantasy novel about a labyrinthian alternate reality. Laika is currently in production on its sixth feature, *Wildwood* (2025), the studio's first fantasy, based on the novel by Colin

Meloy of The Decemberists. It's the studio's most ambitious movie to date about a secret forest in Portland, and it boasts an epic battle sequence.

'CAMP SNOOPY' TRAILER Made for Apple+ <https://www.awn.com/news/apple-tv-drops-camp-snoopy-trailer>

'STAR TREK PRODIGY' SEASON 2 TRAILER <https://www.awn.com/news/cbs-studios-drops-star-trek-prodigy-season-2-trailer>

MTV GREELIGHTS "MIKE JUDGE'S BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD SEASON 3 They are so sure that Season 2 will be a success when it premieres on July 10, that they have placed the order for the 3rd season before finding out how well the 2nd season will do.

'WICKED LEGO BRICKFIELD' TRAILER The story follows Elphaba and Glinda, who meet as students at Shiz University in the fantastical Land of Oz and forge an unlikely but profound friendship. They even have an encounter with "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz." It opens November 27. <https://www.awn.com/news/universal-shares-wicked-lego-brickified-trailer>

GARY SCHWARTZ HAS CREATED AN OPENING FOR 'THE FLINTSTONES' It was created by Gary and his students at the Flint Institute of Arts Museum in their art school. Gary presents hands-on intensive animation workshops there. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23HdvLLrXM4>



IMPORTANT NEW BOOK, 'HANNA AND BARBERA: CONVERSATIONS' It was edited by Kevin Sandler and Tyler Solon Williams and published by the University Press of Mississippi. It is the first collection of its kind about Bill Hanna

and Joe Barbera, likely the most prolific animation producers of the twentieth century. I look forward to reviewing it.

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TAKE A LOOK. A MAJOR ANIMATION AUCTION, ITEMS FROM THE COLLECTION OF MIKE GLAD

I wrote a feature article on his collection 30 years ago and was amazed at what he owned then. The auction catalog is full of remarkable works of art from every period, from Winsor McCoy to *Ren and Stimpy* and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. There are lots of Disney lots. Also, UPA, 2 or 3 drawings from *The Man Who Planted Trees*, several WWII propaganda items and so much more. There are over 1500 lot. The auction is Aug. 16-19. Just Goole "Heritage Auctions animation." Then click on "Current Auction Calendar – Animation Art." Then "History of animation: The Glad Museum Collection." Put your cursor over any image to enlarge it. Have fun! (And this nice selection doesn't include the major works of art in his collection.)



THIS GUY IS A VERY RICH LOSER Billionaire activist investor Nelson Peltz, Founding Partner and CEO, Trian Fund

Management, has sold his stake in The Walt Disney Co., after losing an ugly and expensive proxy battle with the entertainment giant. He sold his entire stake in Disney for \$120 a share, worth \$1 billion.

Peltz tried to win a seat on the Disney Company's board by being critical of the management of the company, particularly the high costs associated with the streaming business, as well as his objections to the way CEO Bob Iger was running things. He failed to win his seat after spending around **\$30 million** on his effort.

Disney spent around \$40 million to keep him off the board. What would you do if you had that much money to play with?



DISNEY'S MONEY IS APPARENTLY BEHIND THE TRUCE WITH FLORIDA'S GOVERNOR. DISNEY PLANS TO SPEND \$17 BILLION THERE ON DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEXT TWO DECADES

Disney will drop the legal battle against DeSantis which clears the way for the corporation to go on developing its 25,000-acre resort. The state has approved Disney building a fifth theme park and three smaller parks. Disney will be adding a lot more jobs to the area (they now employ about 450,00 people) and will make Orlando an even larger tourist destination.



THE EVIL PENGUIN FEATHERS MCGRAW IS RETURNING IN 'WALLACE & GROMIT: VENGEANCE MOST FOWL'

The evil penguin Feathers McGraw, was the sinister co-star in the 1993 Oscar and Bafta winning short *The Wrong Trousers*. If you haven't seen that film, go to your search bar and look it up and enjoy watching *The Wrong Trousers*.



The new film is said to be a cautionary tale of high-tech gone

wrong involving an out-of-control “smart gnome” with a mind of its own. Nick Park said: “I’d had the idea of a film about garden gnomes turning bad for more than a decade, but I could never work out what made them bad.” The film developed when Nick thought, “What if Feathers was involved with these gnomes? We’re hoping that this film will appeal to fans of Gnome Noir everywhere and that people will be gratified when they see what Feathers has been up to since *The Wrong Trousers*.”



ACADEMY MUSEUM JUST SCREENED AGAIN THEIR RARE, RESTORED PRINT OF ‘THE THIEF AND THE COBBLER’ BY RICHARD WILLIAMS The 2013 restoration of the original vision of legendary, never finished or released feature by animator Richard William is an important work of art. If you haven’t seen the wonderful restored *The Thief and the Cobbler*, you can get an idea of what William’s unfished masterpiece would have been like by seeing a version that his skilled admirers created and posted online. Seeing it that way is still a treat. It would have been one of the greatest animated features of all time if it had been completed correctly.

Years ago, ASIFA-SF had a screening of the cobbled together version with one of the people trying to save and restore the film. Garret Gillcrest was our guest of honor and he worked for years locating sequences of the work print. The back story

about why Willams lost his feature is online. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Thief_and_the_Cobbler



Meet LinaBell, a real fox

SHOCKING NEWS - MICKEY MOUSE IS NO LONGER THE MOST POPULAR CARTOON STAR, AT LEAST AT DISNEYLAND IN SHANGHAI At Shanghai Disney Resort, the longest meet-and-greet lines are no longer for Mickey Mouse or Winnie the Pooh. The new top star is LinaBell, a pink fox. You probably never heard of her, but in terms of merchandise being sold, and polls with fans, she, in all her pink glory, is Shanghai

Disneyland's most popular attraction.

LinaBell made her first appearance at Shanghai Disneyland in late 2021. Unlike other Disney characters, she has no back story, no filmography or history in comic books. But she's bubbly and loves to dance and covers visitors' faces with "air kisses." She plays with the tails of her friends and then runs away (fake pink fox tails apparently are for sale). She can also storm off and pretend to throw someone into a pond nearby. She can scrunch herself up as if controlling her anger. She shakes her paws indignantly and then almost immediately calms herself down. As for merchandise young girls can dress in pink to match LinaBell and wear pink fake diamond rings that comes in many sizes including one almost as big as a kid's fist.

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

Top of Form

Bottom of Form

As for her future she may appear in an upcoming six-part series ***Duffy and Friends TV*** being made for Disney+. If you Google her name along with ebay, you will find a wide assortment of dolls with pink tails. They come in a wide range of costumes, sizes and prices. As for her recent popularity, some say it is because she is a local homegrown star, not an import. LinaBell, "is like your stuffed toy has come alive. People relate more to that."



The Most Precious of Cargos. 2024, by Michel Hazanavicius, France

UPDATE ON MY RESEARCH ABOUT ANIMATED HOLOCAUST FILMS [by KC](#)

A few months ago, I discovered and wrote about animation that explores one of the most disturbing subjects in the history of mankind, the Holocaust. (March & April, 2024 issues) These films are not like the [upsetting live action documentaries](#) that show Nazi atrocities. Instead, these are fine biographies of people who survived, as well as inspiring stories about those who perished. Others tell us about historic events including stories about the underground resistance. There is also a humorous film about a Holocaust denier and an excellent drama about tracking down a wanted Nazi war criminal. These films are being applauded and winning prizes at international film festivals. One impressive example, ***Letter to a Pig*** by Tal Kantor from Israel, received an Oscar nomination this year. I recently found out that [The Most Precious of Cargos](#), a holocaust film, was the opening night feature at this year's Annecy Animation Festival.

Since my articles have appeared in this newsletter, I have learned more about these films and have discovered some important information. While there were only a few films that I knew about when I first began writing, now I know of about 50. Over 40 were made after 2010. In fact, more than 20 have been released since

2020! I'm also impressed that some of the films were made with the support of TV networks (BBC, PBS and others), Holocaust museums and non-profit foundations.

It appears animators had avoided this subject matter for many years. Perhaps it was seen as a too disturbing subject, or it was avoided out of respect for people who experienced it in some way. For decades most survivors preferred not to discuss their painful memories. The ugliness shown in live action documentaries horrified viewers.

It is understandable why some of the abhorrent things the Nazis did were a taboo subject for many people. I remember a cousin once asking our grandmother a very general question, what life was like in Europe before she came to America. All she would say was life was awful, why talk about that? I grew up wondering what happened to Jewish relatives and friends of my grandparents who didn't leave Europe, but was told that was too painful to discuss.

Now there is a growing interest in learning about some of those horrors from the past, "lest we forget." We don't want history to slip away, to be forgotten and to repeat itself. Also, there are antisemitic people who deny that it happened. Time is running out for the survivors to speak out.

Animation has turned out to be an effective way to depict the miserable conditions that existed as artwork distances the viewer from feeling the pain and suffering. Our minds seem to interpret drawn characters as symbols of humans, rather than as real people. The first films were made by Polish artists which is not surprising as that country experienced some of the worst moments of WWII. Germany's aggression became a world war when they invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. Then on October 3, Great Britain and France declared war on them and the Soviet Union. The USSR, which had a non-aggression pact with Germany, invaded Eastern Poland on September 17. When Poland surrendered on September 28, it was divided up between their invaders. Poland suffered throughout the war. Almost 30% of the population of Warsaw, their biggest city, was Jewish. The Germans crammed the Jews of Warsaw into less than 3% of the

land in that city in 1940. That area became the infamous Warsaw Ghetto. The Ghetto was sealed off with a ten-foot wall topped with barbed wire and guards were told to shoot to kill. Then in 1942, Germans started to send Jews from Warsaw to Treblinka, Auschwitz and other concentration camps in Poland. (Auschwitz would become the Nazi's largest extermination center.) Some who resisted armed themselves, which resulted in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (1943). They were poorly armed, but they chose to fight and die as heroes. The Nazis responded by burning down the ghetto.

Poland suffered again when our allies, that now included the Russians and the remaining Polish freedom fighters, were pushing the German military back towards Berlin. Some of the battles on the Eastern Front in 1944-'45 were fought in Poland.

One of the Polish animators, who saw the horrors of WWII close up, was Yoram Gross (1926-2015). He says his parents were on Oskar Schindler's list, but they avoided being captured during the war by moving 72 times from one hiding place to another. After the war he found work assisting both experienced live action filmmakers and animators in Poland. Then in 1950 he moved to Israel, where he created, *We Shall Never Die* in 1958. It is a personal, three-minute abstract experimental short without dialog or human characters in it. It doesn't clearly state it is about the Holocaust, but the drawing of barb wire on the title card, the repeated sound of a squad of soldiers marching, images of prayer candles burning and footage of broken eye glasses and a child's doll laying on the ground are symbolic hints that something awful was underway. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eyoyn3hYRzA>

Gross moved to Australia in 1968. One of his first projects in Australia was *Sarah*, 1968, a Holocaust feature about a young girl who lives alone in a forest after the rest of her family was arrested and taken to a concentration camp. When she witnesses a group of Polish resistance fighters trying to blow up a railroad bridge they are captured. She decides to try and destroy the bridge, even though she lacks the tools to do it. Both of Gross' films can be seen online.

Gross became well-known as Australia's Walt Disney. He produced 16 animated features for children, made shows for television, published a series of book and created lots of merchandise.

The most powerful film made in Poland in the 20th Century is *Apel* (*The Roll-Call*) by Ryszard Czekala, 1971, 7 minutes. This is a harsh, thought-provoking work about a man who resists the orders of a concentration camp guard. The guard responds as a savage with a gun. Using animation can somewhat remove the viewer from feeling too empathetic towards the pain and suffering of the people being gunned down. Had this film been made with actors it would have been too uncomfortable to watch. When *Apel* was shown in New York at the Museum of Modern Art in 2003 the show's catalog listed it as one of the "Ten Films That Shook the World." It is posted on YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nz_zQg7k7rw

At the turn of this century, it appeared there wasn't much interest in animated films referencing to the Holocaust. I couldn't find any examples that were released between 1999 and 2009. Perhaps the world's attention was too concerned with other new military conflicts that sprang up in the Middle East, Africa and around Afghanistan and Pakistan. I suspect that as the conflicts dragged on and on, people began to get disgusted and frustrated with hearing about these "forever wars." The old adage that the last justifiable war was WWII, began to surface again along with an interest in making animated Holocaust films.

I found two Polish directors whose more recent work really stands out. Daniel Zagórski (born in 1949) uses surrealism to express his feelings about the Nazi use of forced labor, while Artur Mikulski uses a carefully written text in ***Shielding The Flame*** to give an intelligent understanding of the experiences of Dr. Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Warsaw Uprising.

The Fable of Hansel and Gretel by [Daniel Zagórski](#), Poland, 2012, 18 minutes, is set in a dark, somber, black and white, surreal world. The music is weary and there are guards carry whips and evil looking weapons. They are overseeing children with blank, joyless facial expressions, who are being forced to performing

boring, repetitive work. There is no sense of hope in this story.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWQqZtTs3WM>



Amelia and Saturnin by Daniel Zagórski

Amelia & Saturnin, ca. 2019, 15 minutes, is also on the internet. Zagórski says the film refers to his grandparents being sent to a forced labor camp. He writes his grandfather didn't survive the experience and while his grandmother lived until she was 98, she never got over the trauma. The work is in color and more mature in its composition and pacing. His improved skills creating computer images is quite evident. Some images are similar to ones in *The Fable of Hansel and Gretel* showing them doing repetitive labor, but the tone isn't as unpleasant. There are impressive looking religious icons and other fascinating details. The story has more sequences and the surreal architecture is fanciful. It is a sophisticated and award-winning work of surreal art. Google **Amelia & Saturnin - FilmFreeway**.

According to Eva Stanczyk's book *Commemorating the Children of WWII Poland*, 2019, Zagórski lived near the Broken Heart Memorial in Łódź which was close to the location of the city's labor camp. Stanczyk wrote that when streets were repaired in Łódź, crews sometimes dug up human remains, even two decades after WWII. The crews would leave the bones by the side of the road so [Zagórski](#). At one point Zagórski kept a skull that had been dug up.

Shielding The Flame, directed by Artur Mikulski, 2023, Poland,

19 min. is a really important powerful, hard-hitting short. It is a tribute to [Dr. Marek Edelman](#) who was the last surviving commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. After the war he became a medical doctor. In the film he shares being witness to the inhabitants of the Warsaw Ghetto boarding the trains to the death camps. They walked like sheep going to the slaughter house, but, he adds, they went with dignity. He was there to pull people out of the line if they looked too ill or too weak to make the trip, but doesn't say what happened to them. Apparently, he was assigned to work at the ghetto hospital.

He also talks about the armed resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto, including the Nazis setting the buildings on fire in order to kill those who were hiding in them (some people managed to escape through the city's sewer tunnels). He shares his philosophical thoughts about those who chose to stay and were willing to die as heroes. He also ponders how one can think about the extermination of 400,000 people.

When he shares his thoughts about his becoming a heart surgeon after the war, he says his role in life was to save lives. In the film he says while lighting a prayer candle, "The lord wants to extinguish the candle, and I have to promptly shield the flame..."

When a man escorts others to death trains, he may have a few things to settle with God afterwards. Everyone passed me by... Everybody, 400,000 passed me by." On a website he said, "When one knows death so well, one has more responsibility for life."

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

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began on the evening of Passover, April 19, 1943, when the Nazis sent soldiers to arrest Jews. They didn't expect to meet any resistance. Instead, they retreated when armed resistance fighters opened fire. The burning of the ghetto in early May ended the resistance.

Dr. Edelman's observations about dying as a hero are similar to ones declared in the *Ghetto Manifesto*, dated January 1, 1942, by Abba Kovner. He was 23 and a member of Jewish resistance group in Vilna, Lithuania. He wrote, "Doubters! Cast off all illusions. Your children, your husbands, and your wives are no longer alive... They shall not take us like sheep to the slaughter..."

It is true that we are weak and defenseless, but resistance is the only reply to the enemy! It is better to fall as free fighters than to live by the grace of the murderers. Resist! To the last breath.”
Coming in the August newsletter will be a less somber discussion of animated Holocaust films from other countries.

Note 1: *Variety* published a detailed review of *The Most Precious Cargo* <https://variety.com/2024/film/reviews/the-most-precious-of-cargoes-review-1236015379/#!>

Note 2: If you are interested in seeing a powerful Oscar winning short on the damage that starvation causes and other horrors created on Europe’s population during WWII, see *Seeds Of Destiny*. 1946, made by the U.S. Army. It is said to have raised \$200,000,000 for the United Nation’s War Relief Fund. The landscape and condition of humans in it look similar to what we see happening in Gaza today. The film is an example of the “upsetting live action documentaries” mentioned in the first sentence of the above article. <https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-iba-3&ei=UTF-8&hsimp=yhs-3&hspart=iba&p=seads+of+destiny+documentary+film+online#id=5&vid=afcb0a9d22c1c4c10449fdf6c8eacfa&action=view>



INTERNATIONAL TRICKFILM FESTIVAL OF ANIMATED FILMS,

April 23 – 28. Stuttgart. 2024 by Nancy Denney-Phelps

There were big changes afoot at the International Trickfilm Festival in Stuttgart this year. Annegret Richter, Managing Director of AG Animations films, the German Animation Association, has taken over the reigns as the new Artistic Director. For several years she was head of the animation department at the

International Leipzig Festival for Documentary and Animation Films (Dok Leipzig) and she was formally the artistic and managing director at the International Short Film Festival in Dresden.



Nancy at the festival cafe, L-R Daniel Suljic, ITFS Artistic Director Annegret Richter, Izabela Plucinska, and Nik

It was immediately apparent that she knew what she was doing. The opening ceremony was short on “official speeches” and strong in animated content. For many years the festival has lacked a meeting point café and now there is one right across the pedestrian street from the main theatre and they even offered free espresso for all festival goers. Also to be noted, for the first time, all events were conducted by hosts in English. If only Annegret could have managed the weather as well as she managed the festival! The beginning of the week was cold and rainy but for the last couple of days the sun came out and it was beautiful.

Also new to the position this year is Managing Director Heike Mozer. Although I don’t know her personally, she seems well qualified with a degree in administration and has worked at Filmakademie Baden-Wurtemberg since 1991, taking over the commercial management of the Animationsinstitut in 2002. At the same time, she contributed to the festival in event management

from 1991 to 1998 and was project manager at FMX between 2015 and 2020. With Anja Bickele and the knowledgeable Andrea Bauer in the programming department, the festival is now in good hands with an all-female team at the top.

The first of the five International Competition programs, which was very strong, took place as part of the opening ceremony. The program opened with *The Miracle* directed by Nienke Deutz from The Netherlands. The film, which most people can relate to at one time or another, finds a woman on the “holiday of her dreams”, at a hotel that offers everything a person could want. But she feels that it is not her place and she doesn’t fit in with all of “the beautiful people”. Where exactly is her place?



The Miracle

Several animated films have been made about life under the military dictatorship of Pinochet in Chile, but Carolina Paz Cruz Merchant’s *Recondari* is told through the eyes of seven-years-old Camila and Paula who are neighbors and best friends. Their friendship is torn apart when an entire family is arrested after participating in a peaceful demonstration. The film is full of unexpected and disturbing events.



Recordari received a Special Mention in the graduation film category. In giving the award, the jury said “***Recordari*** reenacts the brutal regime of Pinochet in Chile. Told from a personal point of view with beautiful cinematography”.

German animator Jochem Kuhn is well known for his painterly style. In ***Letzte Generale – Der Bunkerfilm***, his latest film, the war is over and two generals have a final farewell phone call between them. What comes next is surprising, shocking, and thought-provoking.

After some very heavy films, we were sent out of the theatre and to the opening night party with Greg Mcleod’s delightfully charming ***Mee and Burd***. In this very personal film, he tackles his real-life post-operative existential crisis in an exceedingly humorous way. The audience loved the film as much as I did and ***Mee and Burd*** won the Audience Award. The other four programs of competition films were just as good and intense as the opening night program.



Mee and Burd

We have all heard on the news about the horrors, death and destruction caused in the Ukraine by the Russian invasion. The siege of the once vibrant city of Mariupol located on the Sea of Azov was particularly horrific. For nearly three months, Russian forces engaged in a fierce battle against the Ukrainian armed forces to take Mariupol. Russia considered the city to be a strategic prize because if they dominated areas to the west of the city it would give them a land corridor between the Crimean Peninsula and the Donbas Region of Southeastern Ukraine. It would also give them control of one of the largest ports in the region, effectively cutting off Ukraine's ability to export grain to the rest of the world.

In her film ***Mariupol: A Hundred Nights*** Ukrainian animator Sofia Melnky brings the terrors of war to life. It is the story of a little girl who is woken up by air raid sirens and then the sound of bombs falling on her city, Mariupol. Alone, she tries to survive in a burning city in the first days of Russia's full-scale invasion of the Ukraine. To escape, she must wind her way through destroyed streets and buildings, facing the unknown and trusting fate. Sofia dedicated her film to the city of Mariupol and its defenders. It also honors the memory of all of the children who have suffered and died during the Russian invasion of the Ukraine. ***Mariupol: A Hundred Nights*** received a Special Mention from the International

Jury.



Mariupol: A Hundred Nights

Czech Republic animator Daria Kashcheeva follows her multi-award-winning student film, *Daughter*, with a masterful twenty-six-minute achievement, *Electra*. In the film Electra rethinks her tenth birthday, mixing memories with imagination and hidden dreams. Isolated in her fantasy world full of made up, busty dolls, plastic men's body parts, juicy strawberries, and dental tools, she builds up her own relationships with her body and sexuality. Diving deeper into her childhood memories, she again experiences her rebellion against her mother and mixed feelings for her father. Electra has to go through the most painful memories to let her suppressed feelings come out and, in the end, she is ready to reveal what really happened on her tenth birthday.

I have watched the film several times. The first time I was disgusted and wondered why I has spent twenty-six minutes watching that. In subsequent viewings, I have come to understand what a complex film about the inner workings of the human psyche it is. Although *Electra* might not be everyone's cup of tea, it is an important work about self-analysis, self-discovery, and finally facing the truth.

Along with the screenings, there was much more to see and do at the festival. I particularly enjoyed Swiss stop motion animator Elie

Chapuis' Master Class *Passion for Puppets*. He talked about being a teenager in the '90s and the great influence the *Wallace and Gromit* films and *Nightmare Before Christmas* had on him. He was also influenced by stop motion films from countries of the former Soviet Union which were finally seen in the West when he was growing up such as works by Jan Svankmajer and Jiří Trnka.



Elie Chapuis with some of his puppets

Elie has worked on Samuel and Frédéric Guillaume's 2007 film *Max & Co* and Claude Barras' *My Life As A Courgette (Ma Vie De Courgette)* and *Savages*. He also worked on Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* and *Isle of Dogs*. Elie's latest short film *Duck (Canard)* was also in the International Competition. Olga and Vladimir raise ducks on a small isolated farm in the countryside. One day, while feeding the ducks, Vladimir notices a wounded bird and decides to put it out of his misery, but Olga takes the bird into the house to nurse it back to health. In light of the couple's unsuccessful attempts to conceive a child, Olga and the duck bond and she begins to treat it as if it were her human baby while Vladimir is pushed aside as the "baby" becomes the center of

Olga's existence.



Canard

Daily director's chats were held in the filmmakers' lounge. The Anix Awards for the Best German Animation Screenplay and the Trickstar Business Award were also presented in the Filmmaker's Lounge along with this year's ASIFA Prize.



Michaela Pavlatova with her ASIFA Award created by Priit Parn
The ASIFA Prize is awarded annually in recognition of outstanding achievement in the field of animation. The 2024 award was presented to the talented and prolific Czech director and animator Michaela Pavlatova. Her films such as ***Tram, Reci, reci, reci (Words, words, words)*** and ***Carnival of Animals*** are full of creativity and originality while depicting ordinary events such as conversations overheard in a bar or the fantasies of a female tram driver. Her ASIFA Award was a lovely drawing created by

renowned Estonian animator Priit Parn.

The festival presented a program of Michaela's short films accompanied by her personal tour through her life and animation career. There was also a screening of her 2021 feature film ***My Sunny Maad*** about life as a Western woman who marries into a traditional family in Afghanistan.

This year Ireland was in the spotlight with films, panel discussions, special presentations, and a networking lunch in the Neues Schloss or New Castle. The New Castle is one of Stuttgart's historical landmarks and is beautiful inside and out.

When Carl Eugene, Duke of Wurttemberg came to Stuttgart in 1744 at the age of 16, he had a clear idea about an appropriate residence. He demanded the construction of "an apartment befitting his princely dignity and adequate for the size of his court". If this was not done, he would move the court to Ludwigsburg. Thus, the New Palace was built.

The youngest animation fans were not left out of the Irish celebration with special Tricks For Kids screenings. The five programs ranged from films designed specifically for four-year-olds, children six years of age and older, and films specially curated for children eight years and older.

An Irish contribution to feature films for the younger set was ***Puffin Rock and New Friends***. Based on the pre-school TV series for two to five-year-olds, the film is set on a beautiful island off of the coast of Ireland. The main television characters from the original show, Oona, Baba, May, and Mossy return on the big screen along with new characters who arrive on the island. *Puffin Rock* is a co-production between Cartoon Saloon, Dog Ears, and Penguin Books with the support of the Irish Film Board and Northern Island Screen.



Puffin Rock and New Friends

Rounding out Ireland's special presentations was a spotlight on the Institute of Art, Design, and Technology in Dublin and Ballyfermot College of Further Education. There were also several screenings and presentations for the adult audience.

The filmmakers' lounge was not just for eating, drinking, and socializing. Filmmakers and game design studios gave presentations there. One day there was a live drawing challenge complete with prizes.

In the basement of the lounge, there are meeting rooms where presentations and panel discussions were held. One morning I moderated a panel discussion there about ASIFA (The International Animated Film Association/ Association International du Film d' Animation). My four panel members were Deanna Morse, President of the ASIFA Board and a member of ASIFA United States Central; Nina Prange, Board Member of AG Animationsfilm -ASIFA Germany; Elie Chapuis, Co-President of GFSA- Switzerland; and Agnes Li, Board Member and Member' of ASIFA China. During our one-and-a-half-hour discussion, we talked about defining the importance of ASIFA and how the aims and goals of the association differ in the various chapters from country to country. We also discussed what types of activities the different chapters engage in as well as the value of ASIFA for

national and international networking.



Nik presenting his Masterclass

Nik gave a two-hour Masterclass titled *Sync or Swim – Navigating the Channels of Visual Storytelling*. During his presentation, he discussed the craft of putting music and sound onto film. He also showed films with memorable soundtracks such as *Joie De Vivre*. The 1934 animation by Anthony Gross and Hector Hoppin was the first animated short film to have an original symphonic score created by Hungarian composer Tibor Harsanyi.

Each year a cash prize of 5.000 Euros sponsored by MFG Baden-Württemberg is awarded to the best animation-based German computer game. This year's winner was *Closer the Distance* by Osmotic Studio GmbH.

The game is a slice-of-life sim that tells the story of the connection between family and friends in the face of tragedy. Following a fatal car accident, players take on the role of Angela, a young girl from the town of Yesterby, who finds herself watching her loved ones as they navigate the grieving process. Using her ethereal ability to influence the townspeople she once knew; Angela's choices will ultimately determine the fate of Yesterby.

The Game Zone is always a busy place where animation and games merge. Gaming enthusiasts of all ages could try out a miriad of games including the five games nominated for the German Animated Games Award.

Even with the bad weather people were still watching films on the giant LED screen in the grassy square by the cinema and enjoying a beer and wurst in the adjacent beer garden. In previous years primarily older films from past festivals were shown during the day until it was time for the evening feature film when families bring blankets and picnics.

This year during the day there were feature-length films such as Enzo D'Alo's 2023 *A Greyhound of a Girl* and Bill Plympton's latest feature film *Slide* (2023). A series of programs titled *Animation Around Europe* presented short film programs from Portugal, Ireland and Poland. Fantoche Animation Festival presented *Best of Kids Fantoche* and Anima Syros' program spotlighted the current Greek animation scene. The World Animation Film Festival in Varna showed past and present Bulgarian animation. Animest Animation Festival contributed a program of films by strong female animators from Central and Eastern Europe. I like the idea of the curated programs which is new this year. The names, a short description, and the screening times were also listed in the festival guide.

On Sunday, which is Family Day, the screenings began at 11:30 in the morning with famous silhouettes classics by Lotte Reiniger. That was followed by the traditional Sunday morning opera

performance by the Stuttgart Opera. This year it was ***The Magic Flute***. The ingenious version of Mozart's immortal classic was a blend of grand opera and animation with the video art collective 27 providing the video animation.

As much as I love opera, Nik and I missed the performance because we went on a festival excursion. The Stuttgart Region is famous for its incredible wines, to which I can personally attest. The group took the train and then a walk through a lovely park to Riverhouse Winery. There we sampled our first wine and then, glasses in hand, we boarded one of two tractor-driven covered wagons to climb the steep slopes of the vineyard, stopping periodically to sample different wines and admire the beautiful view while our knowledgeable drivers told us about the region and the various wines that we sampled.

After our trip through the vineyards, we returned for a delicious BBQ on the veranda of the Riverhouse Restaurant. The meal featured local favorites and piles of several cuts of meat and bratwurst. The Riverhouse Restaurant is located on the Neckar River with a beautiful view from the veranda.

The festival was so jam-packed with wonderful screenings, presentations, and friends that I couldn't see and do everything that I wanted to. Congratulations Annegret and Heike for a job well done and a fantastic festival.



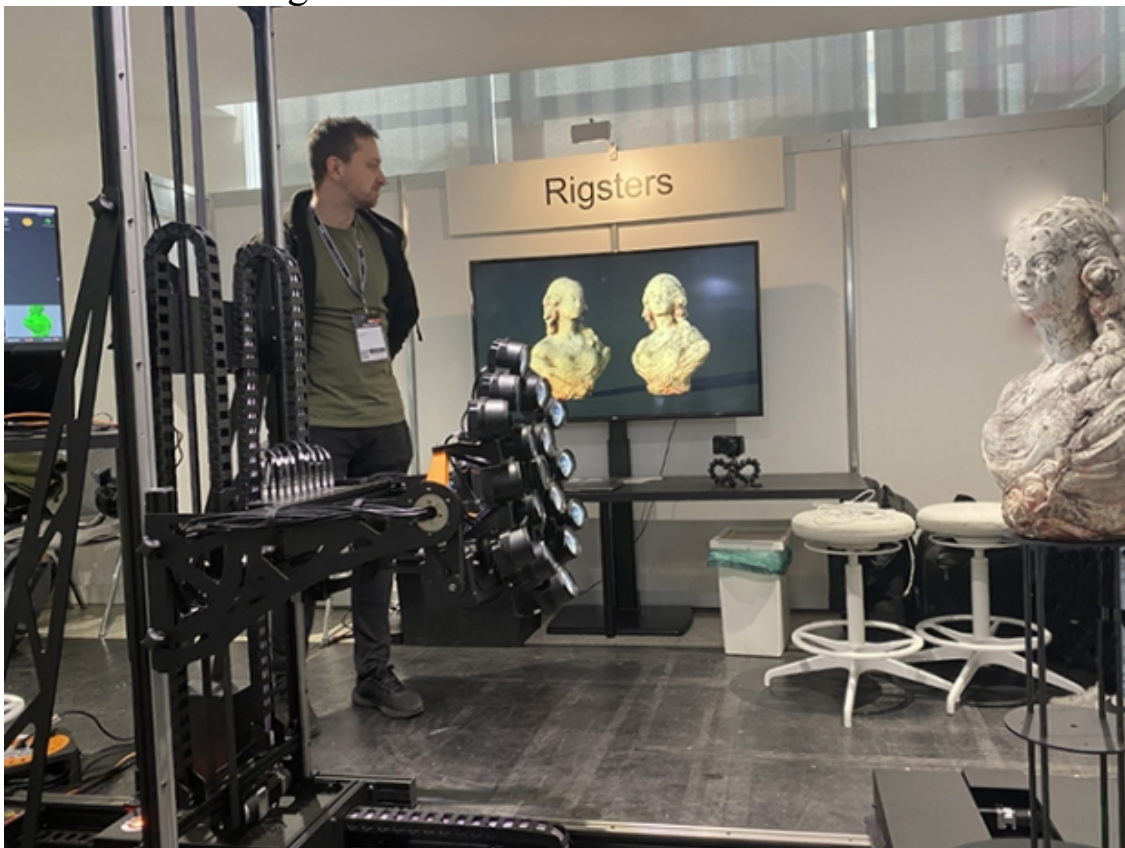
Head Programmer Andrea Bauer

A special thank you to Head Programmer Andrea Bauer for inviting Nik to present a Masterclass and asking me to chair a panel discussion. Nik and I appreciate everything that you do for us every year, Andrea. Also thank you to Anja Bickele for handling our travel, the excursion, and all of the other things that you do.

The 2025 edition of the festival will take place from 6 to 11 May 2025. You can learn more about the festival at www.itsf.de

FMX - 23 to 26 April 2024

Running concurrent to the festival for four days, FMX (Film and Media Exchange), founded in 1994, hosted its 28th edition this year. Over the years FMX has developed into one of the world's most important conferences dedicated to animation, effects, interactive and immersive media. It is the place to learn about all of the latest trends in VFX, animation, and games. This year there were 270 speakers and more than 3,600 participants. The 2024 theme was Connecting Ideas. There was a special focus on the connective issues between people collaborating across platforms, pipelines, and distances, both physical and subjective. Along with the speakers, the Market Place offered the opportunity to experience the latest innovations hands-on. I am not the most technical person and a lot of what I am looking at in the marketplace often goes right over my head, but I always find interesting new things when someone is patient enough to explain what I am looking at.



ARAGO

This year the standout was ARAGO, developed by Rigsters, a 3D scanning studio located in Copenhagen. As it was explained to me ARAGO was developed for mass digitization of objects. It automates the time-consuming process of capturing images for photogrammetry. It can place an object in an environment from a garden to the seashore or in a rain storm. I was quite impressed with the demonstration that I saw where a bust of a woman appeared to be in a garden instead of on a rotating pedestal in front of me.

Twenty-three schools were represented at the FMX School Campus. This is FMX's educational fair where schools present their curriculum, projects, and programs in the fields of art and the technology of computer animation, visual effects, computer games, and VR/AR. Prospective students also have an opportunity to learn about the school's programs from faculty members, staff, and alumni. They can also get a realistic picture of what the school and campus life are like from students who also manage the booths.



Students manning their FMX booth

One of the main goals of FMX is to connect young talent with professionals in VFX, animation, and the gaming industry. Toward this end, FMX presented selected projects by students and recent graduates participating in the School Campus.

At the Recruiting Hub, such international studios as ILM and Ghost VFX met with young talents and professionals to look for new artists to work on their upcoming projects.

Most of the conference is available on demand for a month after closing. The price is 80 Euros for professionals and 40 Euros for students. You can check out the On Demand Guide on their

website www.fmx.de

The 2025 edition of FMX will be held from 6 to 9 May 2025

ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Editor: Karl Cohen

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

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

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Special thanks to Nancy Denney-Phelps who represents our chapter on the international ASIFA board. Emily Berk is our webmaster, and Eihway Su keeps our email list and does a dozen other things.

ASIFA-SF is a chapter of Association Internationale du Film d'Animation with over 40 chapters around the world. Now that we are supposedly post-Covid we had hopes for a rebound with live events once more, but that isn't happening yet.

**TO KEEP OUR CHAPTER ALIVE, WE NEED TO FIND
VOLUNTEERS TO DEVELOP LIVE AND/OR ONLINE
PROGRAMS
UNTIL THAT HAPENS WE ARE OFFERING
FREE MEMBERSHIPS
NEW MEMBERS WANTED, TELL OTHERS TO SIGN UP
TO GET FREE ISSUES OF OUR NEWSLETTER
AND WHATEVER SCREENINGS THAT ASIFA-SF MEMBERS
GET INVITED TO.**

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