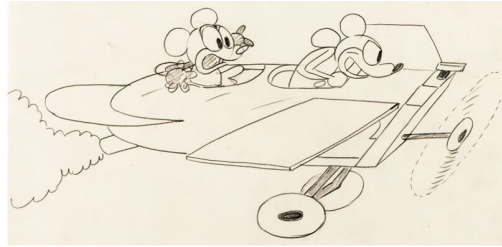


October 2024



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF ANIMATION STOLE THE SHOW IN HERITAGE'S SPECTACULAR \$4 MILLION GLAD MUSEUM COLLECTION AUCTION

The Aug. 16-19 auction showcased Disney' classics plus greats works from UPA, Warner Brothers, Winsor McCay and others. Heritage, an auction house in Dallas Texas, has held the six most successful animation art auctions ever held. It's latest addition was a four-day event that realized \$4,043,971 by selling every lot in the auction of over 1500 items. This extraordinary collection was assembled by Mike Glad, who lived in Fremont CA for many years. It covered almost the entire history of the art form, from Disney to UPA to Warner Brothers, Hanna-Barbera, Max Fleischer and many more. The summer event was the highest-grossing auction to encompass works from all animation studios. Heritage also held a record-breaking Disney auction this year that grossed \$4.87 million.

There was a tie for the top-selling lot (they set an auction record). One was a drawing by the legendary artist Ub Iwerks from ***Plane Crazy***. It showed Mickey and Minnie Mouse and it sold for \$72,000. It's the highest price ever paid for a Disney animation drawing.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

The second work selling for \$72,000 was another Disney masterpiece, a concept painting for *Sleeping Beauty* of Maleficent by Marc Davis. An Ub Iwerks drawing of Mickey Mouse from *Steamboat Willie*, 1928, was the third highest-selling lot. It sold for \$57,600. The Disney Studios dominated the top selling works.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

The only work in the top ten selling works from another studio was a cel set-up from Max Fleischer's Superman in *The Mad Scientist*, 1941. It sold for \$39,600. A cel from *Popeye the Sailor Meets Sinbad* sold for \$21,600.





Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com



A cel from Winsor McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania* sold for \$15,600. The auction also included art from MGM, UPA, Warner Bros. and other theatrical studios along with work starring the Simpsons and other stars.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

Heritage auctioned off another part of Glad's collection in 2021. It was billed as the world's largest Anime collection in 2021 and it sold for \$2.1 million. It attracted a record number of 2,853 bidders from around the globe. Glad has also donated works to several institutions including a nice group to San Francisco's Cartoon Art Museum. There have been major traveling exhibits of works from his collection to museums and colleges with art galleries. He has also produced several films with Leslie Iwerks, Ub's granddaughter. Glad is a remarkable patron of the arts.

I've had the pleasure of interviewing Glad at his former home in Frémont and know that what has been auctioned off and donated to museums is just a part of his enormous collection.





DIRECTOR HAM LUSKE AND WALT

Luske was the supervising director on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937).

He started at Disney animating shorts. He eventually wrote and directed animated features, shorts and TV programs. He received the Oscar for Special Effects in 1965 for *Mary Poppins*.

THE WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM IS EXHIBITING

‘DIRECTING AT DISNEY’ Oct 17, 2024–March, 2025. Directing at Disney will honor many of the legendary directors whose creative talent and innovations made Walt Disney’s animated films possible. It will discuss and illustrate the director’s role and special skills. The exhibit will feature archival photographs, early production notes, storyboards, layout drawings and other items dating as far back as the 1930s. The exhibit is based on the book *Directing at Disney: The Original Directors of Walt’s Animated Films* by Don Peri and Pete Docter. It discusses how the position of director developed from the shorts in the 1920s to the 1970s. directingatdisney.com

THE BOOK ‘DIRECTING AT DISNEY’ In an IndieWire review of the book by Bill Desowitz he writes, “For Docter, who’s always been curious about how directors worked at Disney under Walt, this was an opportunity to learn more about who the directors were and what they did. ‘I think, for me, I was most comforted by the fact that they changed,’ Docter told IndieWire. “I think as a kid, I always had this idea that Walt Disney was just a genius and that everything sprung fully formed from his brain. And then you go read the thing and they’re throwing stuff out left and right. The same as we’re doing today.” Desowitz points out that in the 1930s and ‘40s Walt directed and approved everything that went into the features, but in his later years the building of Disneyland, his TV productions and other things demand a lot of his time. That meant the directors and their animators could have more creative control, but the final approval was still Walt’s.





JENNIFER LEE TO DIRECT BOTH 'FROZEN 3' AND 'FROZEN 4,' DISNEY NAMES JARED BUSH AS HEAD OF THE ANIMATION STUDIO

Jennifer Lee, the co-director of the original *Frozen*, has stepped down as Disney's Animation Chief Creative Officer after six years and will return to direct the next two *Frozen* sequels. Lee will be succeeded in the role by filmmaker Jared Bush, co-writer and co-director of the Oscar-winning *Encanto* and *Zootopia*, and co-writer of *Moana*. Lee is also writing *Frozen 3* which is set for release on November 24, 2027, and is also co-writing *Frozen 4* with Marc Smith. Bush currently serves as co-writer and executive producer of *Moana 2* (November 27) and writer and director of "Zootopia 2" (November 26, 2025). He's also writing the live action Moana (July 10, 2026).

DISNEY HAS ANNOUNCED A NEW ROUND OF STAFF CUTS ARE ABOUT TO BE MADE

Pixar may be making them a lot of money, but other divisions must do more to do their part so... Where the cuts will be made and the number of people to effected was not announced on Sept. 26. All they said was that they were losing a billion dollar a quarter before cuts were made earlier this year, and now they are breaking even.

"We continually evaluate ways to invest in our businesses and more effectively manage our resources and costs to fuel the state-of-the-art creativity and innovation that consumers value and expect from Disney, As part of this ongoing optimization work, we have been reviewing the cost structure for our corporate-level functions and have determined there are ways for them to operate more efficiently." So far, Disney stock is up about 3.5 percent year to date, but trades well below where it sat in 2021 and 2022.



Mr. Chapek, left, was the consummate company man, loyal to Mr. Iger, right, to the point of obsequiousness. But nearly everything Mr. Chapek did (or didn't) do reinforced Mr. Iger's sense that naming Mr. Chapek as his successor had been a huge mistake.

GO INSIDE THE DISNEY CORPORATION AND GET THE DIRT ON 'THE PALACE COUP AT THE MAGIC KINGDOM'

This is the inside story of how Bob Iger undermined and outmaneuvered Bob Chapek, his chosen successor, and returned to power at Disney. It gives an idea of this how corporation is run. One paragraph reads, "For a company that bills its theme parks as the -'Happiest Place on Earth,' Disney's corporate headquarters have long been anything but — a hotbed of intrigue and power struggles. Mr. Chapek's former chief of staff told people the company's sixth-floor executive suite was a "snake pit." To read the detailed five-page story from the *NY Times. Business Section*, that ran Sept. 8, visit <https://www.nytimes.com > disney-bob-iger-chapek>

SERIOUS COMPLAINTS ABOUT WORKING CONDITIONS AT PIXAR Ugly amounts of crunch time is just one of the issues. If interested read [Report: 'Inside Out 2' Artists Had To Crunch Seven Days A Week For Months To Finish Film \(cartoonbrew.com\)](https://www.cartoonbrew.com/inside-out-2-was-the-hit-pixar-needed-but-the-laid-off-employees-who-crunched-on-it-are-still-hurting) A longer article is at <https://www.ign.com/articles/inside-out-2-was-the-hit-pixar-needed-but-the-laid-off-employees-who-crunched-on-it-are-still-hurting>.



Images from *MISSED CONNECTION* and *EDSON'S GRAVY*.
**14th Annual Albany FilmFest, October 10, 12, & 13,
2024**

Rialto Cinemas Cerrito, 10070 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito
The program Albany Greenfest on Thursday, October 10, 2024,
7:30pm includes *Hunky Dory*, by Steven Vander Meer (Animation,

6:00) Scenes of animal life and human existence reveal the quirky and unexpected ways in which we are similar, moving and morphing to the banjo music of Béla Fleck.

On Sunday, October 13, 2024 10:00 am the program titled Connections will include three animated shorts.

Edson's Gravy, by Ryan George Kittleman (2:22), is based on Russell Edson's classic poem, "***Gravy*** is a whimsical ode to a timeless condiment."

- Filmmaker Ryan George Kittleman, who lives in Richmond, will be there.

Le Charade by Erika Totoro (3:20). This is the final performance of a lonely mime. A psychotic episode ensues after his imaginary friend breaks up with him.

Missed Connection by Alex Zitomer (3:00) Maxx needs to catch this flight in order to get to a job interview on time, but what happens when she picks a fight in the airport?



ANIMATION AT THE 27TH ANNUAL UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION FILM FESTIVAL It takes place in SF, Palo Alto, East Palo Alto and at Stanford University. The festival begins Oct. 17 and ends Oct. 27, 2024. Animation is used in several films. For example in the trailer of ***CAN I HUG YOU?*** line animation is used to illustrate the action described <https://vimeo.com/832712521> ***THE CLICK TRAP*** is a feature that is a feature length study of online advertising and a few digital animation/CGI sequences are used to illustrate scenarios, The trailer for ***THE DAY ICELAND STOOD STILL*** includes a little animation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3BLwtd1Z0k> Also ***GIANTS RISING*** has some computer generated animation in the trailer <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9cX1v9zLdU> ***TAX WARS*** is a doc about how giant corporations avoid paying their fair in taxes. It uses slick computer animation in the trailer <https://vimeo.com/925369663/c246f436bd>

The full program will be available at <http://www.unaff.org/2024/schedule.html>.



THE WONDERFUL, BUT RARELY SEEN EXPERIMENTAL WORK OF JANE AARON, IS AT LAST POSTED ON THE

INTERNET Jane (1948 – 2015) was an amazing experimental animator who lived in the Bay Area for a few years. Each work was a delightful surprise as she developed new concepts of what an animated work could be. She also refined her ideas with each new work so her aesthetic was constantly developing. Her independent films have been shown in the Whitney Biennial, at the Museum of Modern Art (NYC) and other museums. Her work is in the permanent collection of those museums and in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Hirshhorn Museum (Washington, DC), the Walker Art Center (Baltimore). She received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1988. *She also created over 200 shorts for Sesame Street (some are online).* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Aaron

Three of her wonderful shorts are also posted on YouTube *Set in Motion*, 1987, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0efertdbm2I> *This Time Around*, 1989, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNaeAlAjmm8> and *Traveling Light*, 1985, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jMmHtgO7IfU> All three feature music by Donald Fagen (of Steely Dan). There is a website that honors her life and provides a detailed biography. It also has trailers and all 9 of her works that were filmed on 16mm. They are available for rent or sale. <https://www.janeaaron.com/bio/>



NANCY'S ONE OF A KIND SPECTACLE(S) - TRAILER Along with writing a book this year, she has also produced a very short (2minute 59 second) film with South African animator Diek Grobler. See what happens when she takes them off. She wrote me, "It all started because when I wear them at festivals. Everyone wants to try them on. At Zagreb my friend Diek said we should make a film with animators wearing my sunglasses. The man who made them and our dog wearing them are the only two non-animators in the film." Watch the trailer at: <https://vimeo.com/1007742971?share=copy>.
A\$AP Rocky - Taylor Swift (Official Video) (youtube.com)

THE WILD ROBOT FINAL TRAILER Frankly, I didn't find the trailer that interesting. Opens in theaters Sept. 27. <https://www.awn.com/news/dreamworks-animation-drops-final-wild-robot-trailer>

NETFLIX SHARES 'ZACK SNYDER'S TWILIGHT OF THE GODS' OFFICIAL TRAILER The warrior Sigrid seeks vengeance against the Gods in this stylized 2D animated series, set in a world of Norse mythology filled with battles, great deeds, and great despair. Some of the action is fierce. It streams September 19. <https://www.awn.com/news/netflix-shares-zack-snyders-twilight-gods-official-trailer>



The Greedy from Richard William's *Raggedy Ann & Andy: A Musical Adventure* (1977)

DISCOVER THE FAROUT IMAGINATION OF EMERY HAWKINS

A tribute to Emery Hawkins (1912-1989) was published by Cartoon Brew that includes nine clips that illustrate his skill at letting his imagination go wild. He worked for several studios during the Golden Age of Animation so enjoy sequences with Bugs Bunny, Woody Woodpecker, Andy Panda, Daffy Duck and others, plus there is a minute long Speedway Gasoline ad he created at John Hubley's studio.

<https://www.cartoonbrew.com/animotor-spotlight/animotor-spotlight-emery-hawkins-242760.html>

ANIMATION AT THE CREATIVE ARTS EMMY AWARDS The Outstanding Animated Program winner was *Blue Eye Samurai: The Tale of the Ronin and the Bride*. Netflix. The Outstanding Main Title Design winner was *Shogun*, FX Productions. **2024 Creative Arts Emmy Winners — Full List (indiewire.com)**

WHAT SORT OF PERSON WOULD BUILD INTO HIS HOUSE GAGS THAT WERE PROBABLY INSPIRED BY TEX AVERY?

His home improvements are totally off the wall. It is like a live action version of an Avery cartoon. Depending on how you feel about cartoon violence, you will either love or hate this outrageous video.

<https://youtube.com/shorts/rDI-jooW6ks?si=lsebQWSBy3XVey1U>

IF YOU LIKE WEIRD SURREAL VISUAL ‘GAGS,’ ENJOY THIS LIVE ACTION VIDEO SHOT IN UKRAINE. IT IS

TOTALLY BIZARRE I disliked the sound track so I turned it off, but the visuals fascinated me. They are wild, amazing. awful, amusing at times. etc. Is it art or total crap? It out does Dali/Bunuel for trying to shock. I assume the flying car stunt was really dangerous. [ASAP Rocky](#) - [Tailor Swif \(Official Video\)](#) [\(youtube.com\)](#)



A NEW DOCUMENTARY ABOUT THE FLEISCHERS, ‘CARTOONING AMERICA’ WINS A \$200,000 PRIZE! WHEN WILL WE GET TO SEE IT?

The animation history documentary *Cartooning America: The Fleischer Brothers Story*, a film by Kathryn Dietz & Asaf Galay, has won the sixth annual Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film. The director, Asaf Galay who is from Israel, received a \$200,000 cash prize. The animation history documentary won the prestigious sixth annual Library of Congress Lavine/Ken Burns Prize for Film. [The film](#) explores the work of two Jewish immigrants Max and Dave Fleischer, who produced Betty Boop, Popeye, Superman and other cartoons, and innovated many animation techniques. The film hasn't been released yet. Asaf's films include directing *Army of Lovers in the Holy Land* (2018), *The Muses of Bashevis Ainger* (2014) and *The Adventures of Saul Bellow* (2021),

plus, I'm told by friend who lives next door to him in Tel Aviv, a film about super-heroes in Israeli comics.



'THE LEGENDS OF PARIS: A TALE OF THE 19TH CENTURY ARTISTIC SCENE' IS AN ANIMATED FOUR-PART SPECIAL

Produced by Silex Films and Arte, the four-part series offers an intimate portrait of some of France's most beloved artistic and literary figures. Taking viewers into the bustling heart of 19th-century Paris, it follows the colorful lives of such legendary artists as Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, George Sand, Louis-Hector Berlioz, Honoré de Balzac and Charles Baudelaire. The international interest in the period and personalities is evident. Arte Distribution has already inked pre-sale deals for *The Legends of Paris* with TV Unam in Mexico; The Arts Channel in New Zealand; Swiss broadcaster SRF; Hrvatska radiotelevizija in Croatia; Radio and Television of Montenegro; Georgia's LEPL Public Broadcaster; and Hellenic Parliament TV in Greece. Arte will air the series in France and Germany.



**‘VARIETY’ IS WRITING ABOUT THE FRENCH EDITORIAL
CARTOONIST AUREL WHO BECAME A SUCCESSFUL
ANIMATION DIRECTOR**

Aurel established his career as an animator with *Josep*, an emotionally charged feature that showed the shameful way the French treated Spanish refugees escaping the Spanish Civil War. Republican fighters and civilians fleeing Franco's dictatorship were imprisoned in concentration camps upon arriving in France. They were under-fed and became victims of ill-treatment. However, Josep Bartolí the artist that is the main character in the film, becomes friends with a gendarme (French military policeman) who secretly gives him a pencil and paper. Bartolí's sketches in the film of the concentration camp are called Goya-esque.

He eventually goes to New York and Mexico where he meets the painter Frida Kahlo, with whom he falls in love. *Variety's* review *Josep, A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words in This Animated Internment Camp Story*, called the film “an engaging tribute to the legacy of Spanish artist Josep Bartolí (1910-95), a Catalan republican. The film serves as a sharp reminder of the ignominious fate of some of the 500,000 Spanish refugees fleeing Franco's anti-fascist forces in early 1939, and it also highlights the power of drawing to bear witness.”

Josep was selected to be shown at the 2020 Cannes Film Festival, but the festival was forced to cancel due to the Corona Virus. It

went on to win France's César for best animated film and the European Film Award for best animated feature, as well as several other festival prizes. It was theatrically released in France in 2020, and grossed \$1,373,465. Rotten Tomatoes gave it a 100% from critics (from 9 reviews) and 86% from the public. **Josep (2020) - Trailer (English Subs) (youtube.com)**

In a review at www.uclfilmsociety.co.uk by Sophiya Sian, she writes, "In his debut feature, Aurel masterfully sheds light onto a blind spot in French history without leaving his audience in the depths of despair for too long. I was also surprised when I found myself laughing aloud with them and the rest of the audience in many bright moments of joy and gentle humor... Aurel intentionally manages the sensory experiences of the viewer, often employing layered sounds when movement or visual detail is lacking. Once Josep finally leaves the camp, we are therefore able to fully appreciate the vibrancy of his more liberated reality with the bursting colours of Mexico, and his iconically vibrant partner Frida Kahlo, whose words underpin the entire film: *"The day that you finally let color in, you'll have tamed your fear."*



Variety reports Aurel is now working full time on *Animals in a Nutshell*, an "offbeat" science series for TV (20 four-minute-long episodes). The focus is on recent discoveries about the animal world throw light on the extraordinary abilities of the creatures that inhabit our planet. Each episode of *Animals in a Nutshell* takes us alongside a species and the scientists who take a close interest in it. A pop-naturalist dive into the richness of the living world, an infinite source of inspiration for humans brought by the coolest science professor!

He is also developing *Desert*, an animated Western set in France's Cevennes mountain range. He says it will be more or less a traditional western and an "Indiana Jones" style adventure and set in the late 19th century, *Desert* will follow a Mexico-born gunslinger exploring south-central France with a mysterious mission. Rediscovering his family's ancestral land centuries after the religious wars forced those kinsmen to flee, our caballero soon steps in to protect a local clan from an oppressive landowner and his abusive henchmen. "We want to bring together two universes that should have nothing to do with one another," says the filmmaker. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bS9apnbe9Eg>

Note: This item is included in this newsletter as it hints at the cultural gulf between what is possible to fund in Europe, but in the US the two features would probably go unfunded.



PADDINGTON BEAR FANS REJOICE The third Paddington feature, *Paddington in Peru*, is hitting theaters in November. StudioCanal is already looking to expand the franchise on both the big and small screen.

PROPOSED LAWS TO CONTROL AI The union SAG -AFTRA is praising the California state Senate for passing a law that restricts the usage of artificial intelligence-created digital replicas of dead performers. The actors union shared in a statement shortly after the passage of AB 1836 on Saturday. The bill now heads to Gov. Gavin Newsom's desk, and he will have until the end of September to decide

whether to sign it into law, veto it or allow it to become law without his signature. Earlier this week, the state Senate also passed AB 2602, which tightens consent requirements for digital replicas of living performers.

HOW SOON BEFORE AI DOMINATES ANIMATION

PRODUCTION? A friend recently read “Jeffrey Katzenberg, the co-founder of DreamWorks and former chairman of Walt Disney Studios, has predicted that generative AI could eradicate 90 percent of animation artist jobs.” I replied, “Who knows what will actually happen? I read something like 30% of the work will be AI within 5 years. I think people will try AI when it is good looking enough for crappy productions, but it being really useful on high end commercial productions may be a longer way off. Also, it may have flaws that may limit its use. Motion capture for example tuned out to render faces that looked dead when they were not moving. AI development may or may not go smoothly.” I think it might be used to create storyboards/reference material before it is used in finished productions. It might also turn out to be too expensive to use except by studios with lavish budgets.



**WANT TO SEE ANIMATED POLITICAL CARTOONS THAT
TRUMP HATES?**

Visit www.markfiore.com

AI RULES WERE JUST SIGNED INTO LAW IN CALIFORNIA

- **AB 2839, from Assemblymember Gail Pellerin.** Keeps misleading deepfakes out of campaign ads and election communications close to Election Day, protecting candidates and election officials while respecting the First Amendment. This law would have addressed Elon Musk's sharing of a misleading deepfake video of Vice President Kamala Harris, which was viewed 150 million times in one week on X, and the "Joe Biden" robocall encouraging New Hampshire Democrats to not vote in the state's primary. The bill goes further in limiting political deepfakes than any other in the nation. It is an urgency measure and thus takes effect immediately.
- **AB 2655, from Assemblymember Marc Berman.** Combats online disinformation in our elections by placing first-in-the-nation requirements on large online platforms to remove or label deceptive digital content related to elections during specified periods, and requires them to provide mechanisms to report such content. It also authorizes candidates, elected officials, elections officials, the Attorney General, and a district attorney or city attorney to seek injunctive relief against a large online platform for noncompliance with the bill.





**THE EUROPEAN ANIMATION AWARDS, ALSO KNOWN AS
THE EMILE AWARDS
HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR NOMANATIONS FOR 2024**
By Nancy Denney-Phelps

The European Animation Awards, also known as the Emile Awards (named after Emile Chol), are an annual ceremony that recognizes and celebrates the best European animation. The awards honor the achievements of animation professionals, including independent animators and studios, across Europe. The European Animation Awards Association was founded in 2017 by renowned animation professionals to celebrate the art of animation.

I'm listing the nominated features to illustrate how divided the animation business is between N. America and Europe. You probably know almost nothing about eight of the nine feature films. (The 9th film, *My Love Affair with Marriage*, was created in both the US and Europe

and it had a brief run in a very limited number of cities in the US.) The 9 films are: ***Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*** (France, Luxemburg, Canada, Netherlands), director Pierre Földes; ***Chicken for Linda!*** (France, Italy), directors Chiara Malta, Sébastien Laudenbach; ***Mars Express*** (France), director Jeremie Perin; ***My Grandfather's Demons*** (Portugal, Spain, France), director Nuno Beato; ***My Love Affair with Marriage*** (Luxemburg, United States, Latvia), director Signe Baumane; ***Nayola*** (Portugal, Netherlands, Belgium, France), director José Miguel Ribeiro; ***Rosa and the Stone Troll*** (Denmark), director Karla Nor Holmbäck; ***Tender Metalheads*** (Spain), director Joan Tomas Monfort & Carlos Perez-Reche and ***Unicorn Wars*** (Spain, France, United Kingdom), director Alberto Vázquez.

For details about the Emiles and list of the categories and films visit **[Emile Awards 2024 - European Animation Awards](#)** | **[Emile Awards](#)**

Nancy told me later, “I got to present the Lottie Ringer Life Time Achievement Award to Priit Paren.”



Adam Elliot

**ANIMATED GEM ‘MEMOIR OF A SNAIL’ PROVES THE
MEDIUM IS FOR EVERY KIND OF STORY,**

BY [ANNE THOMPSON](#), FIRST PUBLISHED BY INDIEWIRE

Screening at Telluride, animator Adam Elliot takes IndieWire behind the making of his mordant Australian comedy, which won best feature film at Annecy, and stars local talent Sarah Snook, Kodi Smit-McPhee, and Jacki Weaver.

[?](#) Australian stop-motion animator Adam Elliot, who is showing his

second stop-motion [animation](#) feature aimed at adults, *[Memoir of a Snail](#)* at [Telluride](#), hasn't been diagnosed with OCD, "but I am probably at the very tip of it," he told IndieWire on Zoom. "I love the number nine." Thirty years ago, when he was at [film](#) school, he thought, "Wouldn't it be nice to make a trilogy of trilogies? I've always loved a triptych of paintings, the number three? And I thought, 'I'll do three short shorts, three long shorts, and three features.' I never thought it would happen. But I'm getting close."

So far, he has completed seven of the nine films, with two left, including one feature. Elliot, [like Guillermo del Toro](#), is proving that animated films do not have to only be aimed at children. Many of his films deal with outsiders, often with some sort of affliction. "When I first started, it was never a conscious or deliberate strategy," he said. "I just tended to make films about people around me who I knew, family and friends. I've always been interested in mental illness and obscure or rare afflictions. What links all my films now is that these are people who are perceived as different or imperfect, and in many ways they are the opposite. People who are marginalized, misunderstood, they're the people I'm fascinated by, and want to tell stories about. I'm not interested in fantasy or talking animals. I strive to create very real and believable and authentic characters, and I base nearly all of them on people I know."

Lonely Grace Pudel (Sarah Snook) narrates her memoir in the form of a letter to her favorite snail, Sylvia. Grace collects snails, among many other things. In fact, Grace is a bit of a hoarder, and tells us how she got there, from her childhood through a disastrous marriage. She was attached to her wheelchair-bound single alcoholic father (Dominique Pinon) and twin brother (Kodi Smit-McPhee), but when the father suddenly keels over, she and her brother are shipped to separate foster homes on opposite sides of the country. An eccentric older woman named Pinky (Jackie Weaver) befriends Grace and makes her as happy as she can be until she is reunited with her twin. "Losing a twin is like losing an eye," says Grace in the film.

Elliot's mother had a bit of the hoarding tendencies evinced by his lead character, who grew up with a cleft palate. "She's an extreme collector," Elliot said. "I've always been fascinated: when does a

collection become a hoard? And usually it's to do with shame. And my mother's certainly not at that level yet. She just can't throw things away. She collects plastic bags, and she has seven wooden spoons. Her cupboards are jam-packed."

Elliot spoke to psychologists and read books on the psychology of hoarding. "It has a lot to do with trauma as well, and severe, extreme hoarders have tended to have had a loss of a child or a sibling or a partner in a traumatic fashion, and the collecting is a way of coping," he said. "So every item they keep has a sentimental value, and they just can't bear to throw it away because it has meaning. Having lost both her parents at a young age and the loss of her twin is the most traumatic. I like to drag my characters through the mud. I like my protagonist to have either a lot of misfortune or bad luck. How do they cope with that?"

Luckily, in the end, Elliot rewards Grace for all the torture he puts her through. "Who hasn't felt lonely, who hasn't felt different and misunderstood?," said Elliot. "I'd like to meet Grace. My characters, even though they're clay, they become very real and and I respect and cherish them."

Pinky is a colorful older character, an ex-exotic dancer who dresses in a flashy way and hoovers up life. Elliot was partly inspired by "Harold and Maude." "I've always been interested in people as they age," he said. "They become less inhibited and they have more free will and free spirit." When Snook watched the film for the first time on opening night at the Melbourne Film Festival, she told Elliot she wished she had played that character. "Pinky's the sort of person we all aspire to be as we age."

Elliot has a following mainly in Australia and Europe. "They have a long history of dark animated cinema," he said. "It can be adult. Whereas in America, they struggle a bit more, particularly in the mainstream. I get emails all the time saying, 'your films aren't for children.' I'm labeled as an arthouse filmmaker, an independent. I am catering to a much smaller demographic: it's quite broad in terms of age. So I have a lot of young people emailing me at the moment, male and female who relate to Grace as well as older people."

The filmmaker starts with the script first, and spends years on each screenplay, with many drafts. “I know vaguely what the characters are going to look like,” he said. “So once I’ve locked off the script, then I go into design, and I start drawing the characters, and then I’ll start playing with the clay and and then I hand that all over to the art department, and they begin making the thousands of items that need to be made.” During Australia’s endless lockdown, Elliot drew the storyboards and got started on the production design, ending up with some 6,000 drawings.



Behind the scenes of *Memoir of a Snail*

When casting he always had Snook in mind, one of several Melbourne actors in the ensemble. “I thought of other Australian actors, Cate Blanchett and Nicole Kidman, but they just didn’t seem to have that vulnerability and quietness that Sarah’s voice has,” he said. “You can have a wonderful performance from an actor and wonderful animation, and you marry the two together, and they just don’t work. There’s no rhyme or reason why that happens, and it happens all the time. So we were incredibly nervous that her voice wouldn’t marry, but I spend a lot of sessions with her in the studio, and we talked a lot about keeping keeping her voice quiet without it becoming a dull monotone, and knowing where to put in a bit of bit of color and a bit light and shade

and and humor. It was a lot of work. Grace can be very boring because she is in her room with her books and her ornaments and not much happens until [romantic interest] Ken comes along.”

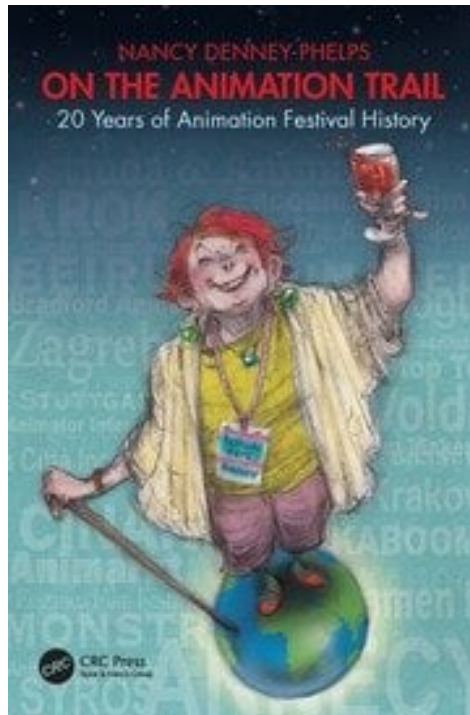
The \$4.7 million film’s costly opening sequence, where the camera pans over a chaotic pile of the props you eventually discover in the film, was inspired by the Xanadu warehouse in *Citizen Kane* as well as the films of Jean-Pierre Jeunet. It took weeks to set up and shoot. “We wanted to say to the audience from the get-go,” said Elliot, “this is a bit more sophisticated, and you’re in for a challenging hour and a half.”

The filmmakers create maquettes for each character, at different ages. The leads often have as many as a dozen. They’re not cheap, they can run as high as \$20,000 each to construct. “They’re like, Mr. Potato Head,” said Elliot, “you can pull their heads off and swap their arms and put on different mouths. Pinky alone had over 100 different mouth shapes that we’d have to plug on and off. They had all these skeletons and armatures inside them, and we have to make little tiny blinks, and the little pupils on the eyeballs are magnetic. They’re intricate little machines.”

In their studio, Elliot had seven animators working non-stop for 32 weeks, and full camera and art departments. At capacity, the studio had over 50 crew. “The beauty of all animation is your characters can look however you want them to look,” said Elliot. “We will create any world we want. All independent filmmakers cherish that control.”

Elliot is the only filmmaker to win Annecy twice in the feature category. Eliot might be due for a return to Oscar contention after winning for his short *Harvie Krumpet* 21 years ago. So he knows he’s in for six months of promotion. “In my downtime, stuck in airport lounges,” he said, “I’ll be trying to write the beginnings of the next one.”

***Memoir of a Snail** screened at the 2024 Telluride Film Festival and the 2024 Toronto International Film Festival. IFC Films will release it later this year.*



COMING DECEMBER 18 FROM RUTLEDGE PRESS

'On the Animation Trail 20 Years of Animation Festival History'

By [Nancy Denney-PHELPS](#)

ISBN 9781032565682, 244 Pages 55 Color Illustrations, December 18, 2024 by CRC Press, free shipping (6-12 business days) available for pre-order on November 27, 2024. Item will ship after December 18, 2024, Original Price \$59.99 for the soft cover. Sale Price *USD* \$47.99. (Hardback is \$128.00)

This book charts the history of the last 20 years of animation festivals. From Annecy, the oldest animation festival in the world, to Beirut, or the founding of the festival in Peja, Kosovo, Nancy-Denney Phelps has recorded not just the films screened but also the people and what makes each festival unique.

What is it like to travel to China, Beirut, or Kosovo for an animation festival? Spend a week on a boat with 200 animators from around the world or be thrown off a train in Belarus? All of this and much, much more has happened to Nancy Denney-PHELPS in her many years as an animation journalist.

Documenting over 20 years of travels, this book will appeal to all those with an interest in animation. If you are a young animator and want to

know what festival life is like, this is the book for you. If you are a seasoned veteran and want to bring back some memories of festival past this book should bring some smiles to your face. [https://](https://www.routledge.com/On-the-Animation-Trail-20-Years-of-Animation-Festival-History/Denney-Phelps/p/book/9781032565682)

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THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION CHAIR REJECTS CALL TO REVOKE DISNEY'S ABC LICENSES OVER TRUMP-HARRIS DEBATE

Jessica Rosenworcel, FCC chair, says, "The First Amendment is a cornerstone of our democracy. Commission does not revoke licenses for broadcast stations simply because a political candidate disagrees with or dislikes content or coverage. Trump and a number of other prominent Republicans complained about ABC's handling of the debate and the questions and fact-checking from moderators Linsey Davis and David Muir. In some cases, they embraced conspiracies like the idea that the network gave Harris the questions in advance."

ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION

Newsletter Editor: Karl Cohen

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

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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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