Welcome to ASIFA Central! We are the Midwest -US chapter of ASIFA, the oldest organization of animators in the world. Our chapter was established in 1975. While our community is separated by our far-flung geography, we are united by our love of animation. Our diverse membership is a blend of independent animators, animation artists, professors, seasoned pros, students, and fans of the art of animation. We have a robust board working on a number of initiatives for 2021 – including Ani-Jam’s, Bi-monthly virtual "coffee breaks," and the annual retreat!

International Animation Day, 2020:
Spiritus Mundi: Animating the World - R. Brad Yarhouse, President, ASIFA Central

2020 marked the 60th anniversary of ASIFA. Each year on October 28th, ASIFA celebrates the birth of animation recognized as the first public performance of projected moving images: Emile Reynaud’s Theatre Optique in Paris, on the 28th of October, 1892.

This year, as part of International Animation Day, we asked each chapter and our partners to create up to a 2 minute animated story that gives us some insight about what makes them unique, what is significant for them as people of their region, culture, land, and language. Each chapter or partner organization that participated this year decided how their segment of the film will be created and what they wish to communicate about themselves.

The combined film was called *Spiritus Mundi: Animating the World*, a title inspired by W.B. Yeats who saw Spiritus Mundi as the world spirit that provides inspiration to the poet or writer.

The film made its debut on October 28th, 2020 to coincide with International Animation Day. The event will streamed on a YouTube channel with chat available for comments and well wishes. Coordinators, board members, animators and other guests were part of the celebration that then streamed out to YouTube for anyone to watch. It was a moment to speak about ASIFA as an international body. We shared stories and expressed our good wishes about the 60th anniversary. In this era of growing hate and prejudice, ASIFA as a multicultural, multinational, network of artists has the untapped potential for communicating about our shared humanity. As founder member John Halas stated, "we consider animation as a universal expression which is capable of immense contribution if given a chance."

ASIFA has over 40 chapters throughout the world supporting professional animators with a diversity of social economic backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, ages, and political systems. The ASIFA chapters involved in the 2020 Spiritus Mundi included Australia, BIH (Bosna, Hercegovinia), Egypt, Finland, Hellas, Iran, India, Lithuania, Switzerland, and ASIFA USA chapters Central, East, and South.

*Spiritus Mundi: Animating the World* was also highlighted at a number of International Animation Day Showings including Paris and Tehran.

In creating this film we were interested in exploring ways that we can bring awareness not only to our 60th anniversary but "help to promote progress towards peace and mutual understanding between all people," as stated in our ASIFA statutes preamble.

(Adapted from the press release of September, 2020)
The IAD 2020 report from ASIFA/Central USA
Deanna Morse, ASIFA/Central treasurer, Vice President, ASIFA International

❖ We were able to have a successful “At Home ASIFA/Central Pandemic Celebration IAD 2020,” despite some challenges.

❖ We created an on-line program, password protected on Vimeo, with 19 films representing all of the countries that offered work this year for the celebration.

❖ Using the film freeway platform, we reviewed titles and selected films. We wrote to the filmmakers for permission to download, if needed. (In some cases, we did not receive a response, so we had to cut those films from our proposed program.)

❖ Three people worked on the selection, title design and edit, Jim Middleton, Deanna Morse (me) and Jim Schaub.

❖ We contacted all the included filmmakers and thanked them, and provided them the password and screening link. We required our ASIFA/Central members to request the link for screening.

Result:
❖ We created a program of films, with images and a short description.
❖ From Vimeo analytics, we know this IAD screening had a minimum of 32 views. Assuming at least 2 people per household, a minimum of 64 people participated.

The Future:
❖ I think if I were to do it again in lock-down, I would offer the screening link more freely. But, it is not the number of people who taste an opportunity that counts. If this experience only touches one person deeply, and provides a context for considering our shared humanity, that is enough. The purpose of IAD is to celebrate our shared global connection, through our love of the art of animation. And, from feedback after the virtual event, I believe we were successful in that goal.
❖ OK. You always want to make a change afterwards. Well, technically, I would have added some sound effect applause in between the films, to make it feel more like an in-person screening, a celebration. And, it would have been good to have a ZOOM with filmmakers to connect with each other.

❖ However, I am just glad that we were able to pull this off. Happy IAD! We celebrate the diversity and richness of international animation. This year, 2021, no pandemic, we hope.

Deanna Morse continues to recover from reviewing over 600 films for her part of this year’s Academy Award (tm) membership vote. Sworn to secrecy, she did reveal that some the films were in color and a few entries involved certain familiar aspects of an art known as animation.

Zina Papadopoulou from Helas (Greece) provided photos of herself and her two children watching the screening.

A 1912 one-off comic strip by Winsor McCay, from The Battle Creek Moon Journal
Never Too Many Books Department:


While assembling a bibliography of animation books in the archives here, this untouched recent addition fell into my lap. Actually, it was onto my left foot. In any case, it got my attention.

Back in my educator days, I’d complete the semester on Media History by following the climax of *Anastasia* (1997) with Cohl’s *Fantasmagorie* (1908) to demonstrate how far animation “industry” had developed - or, in an even tighter time frame, *Skeleton Dance* (1929) followed by the “Night on Bald Mountain” sequence of *Fantasia* (1940). Or tighter still, *Fantasmagorie* (still 1908) with *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) to show the leap possible in just six years between two individual artists.

The many biographies of Disney, the masterful review of McCay’s life by John Canemaker, the warm reflection of the life of Walter Lantz by Joe Adamson, the Fleischer tales by Leslie Cabarga and Ray Pointer - they all give insights to the individual lives and struggles of the craftsmen and creators of the animated worlds we enjoy, but a one-source guide that sweeps along the first century of the development of animation remains a welcome addition to the bookshelf. Also, enough time has passed where some of the more unsavory tales along the way can be related, along with the friction among personalities that have percolated into legendary anecdotes.

It always seemed that the Fleischer brothers suffered from an excess of comfort. They began by earnest effort, diligent exploration, but until things started falling apart rapidly in the late 1930s, were never truly “hungry.” There was Bray as a distributor, then Paramount, and a lot of pre-code resources to help market their product. Disney began as a literal struggling artist, and when success was finally in reach, was outmaneuvered by distributors almost immediately, ever-after kept on the alert while redoubling his efforts to create a better entertainment experience. Cohl and McCay had to wait over a generation after their passing to be “rediscovered”; ultimately, even the Fleischers became vague memories until television syndication brought recognition. And behind them all percolated the denizens of Warner Brothers’ “termite terrace,” perpetrating subversion with Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck.

This is a lot of material to discuss in a 411 page book. Reid Mitenbuler even takes time to analyze the metamorphosis of Disney’s wardrobe as he evolved into the TV persona of “Uncle Walt.”

*Wild Minds* joins the shelf along with Maltin’s *Of Mice and Magic* and Michael Barrier’s *Hollywood Cartoons* as a good introductory reference for fans, educators, and students.

There is a wonderful 48 minute interview with Reid Mitenbuler by Jerry Beck on youtube - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TW1ILCDKJt4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TW1ILCDKJt4)
Online presence for all - save the travel expense! Annoy your credit card by trading in Euros! The Ann Arbor Film Festival this year will feature the amazing contributions of ASIFA Central members Christine Veras and Steve Leeper, in “Animation Connections,” Saturday March 27 at 12:45pm, EST.

The next issue of the ASIFA Central newsletter will feature fun discussions from our many CoVid-inspired ZOOM coffee breaks, hosted by the techno-savvy Michael Long, who communicates with everyone from a different time zone. Now when Daylight Savings pays interest in March, that’s nearly as good as time travel!