



The ASIFA Central Board

Volunteers all,
gleefully promoting
the best of all
possible worlds while
attending to their
gardens:

President

Julie Goldstein

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Treasurer and International IAD
Coordinator

Bri Yarhouse

Social Media Coordinator and
Chapter Ambassador:

Tracy Miller-Robbins

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Secretary, Yr Hmb! Typst, and
Occasionally Bothersome
Membership Coordinator

Jim Middleton

With Free-Range Board
Members

Deanna Morse

(Madame President to All
ASIFAnians!)

and

Gretchen Vinnedge

Stephen Leeper

Michael Long

Bob Swieringa

Charles Wilson



Coffee Breaks Abounding!

The January 4th assembly of international animators had some of the membership rising, literally, to the occasion - it was 5am in Mumbai! *Wolf Children*, *Robot Dreams*, and *Letter to a Pig* were added to everyone's "must see" list for 2024, as was *The Boy and the Heron*, the latest farewell film by Hayao Miyazaki, now 83 years young and perpetually dazzling. The year may well be a collection of "very good things happening to very bad movies," to judge from some of the blanket distribution choices at theatres, or resurrections of films streamed during the pandemic for a second life on a shared big screen.

International distribution systems are also wildly variable - the emerging animation industry in Greece is finding its niche with *The Knight's Hart* and Denmark is underwriting projects with its Animation Workshops scheduled throughout the coming year.

Independent productions continue to struggle with completion - the anxiety from hearing "I'm still waiting on..." (insert production step here) is palpable.

Deanna Morse is re-working her website, everyone is more than somewhat frustrated by the file update process of the IMDb, and one of Michael Long's students gave him a plastic gorilla.

The February 1st caffeinated coordination fell within days of the centennial of Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue* performance at Aeolian Hall, making its first acoustic recording from a few weeks later one of the latest entries into the amazing world of the Public Domain. The west coast was experiencing *atmospheric rivers* ("how's the fishing there?") and Carlos Rosas held the record for a commute to work (but his trips to CalArts from LA gave him lots of practice).

AI entered the discussion as a probable challenge but, nonetheless, a helpful tool for a solitary producer needing a variety of inspirational sketches and designs

quickly, and the softwares *Glaze* and *Nightshade* can poison a digital creation from being absorbed by the borg of artificial intelligence.





January 2024 - Animators in search of a warm place to talk: Jim, Mike, Deanna, Gretchen, David, Orrin, Vivi, Chris and Shweta

As things in this technological quagmire evolve, there was a consensus among experienced creators that, “We don’t know what’s right, but we know what’s wrong,” with the added observation that “we can be outlaws” at times (Chat GPT later announced the release of its AI *Sora*, which will create text-to-image animation with reportedly simple statements).

Deanna Morse indicated that her attendance at the upcoming Academy Awards is unlikely, but she *will* be among the judges at this year’s Ann Arbor Film Festival.

Signe Baumann’s Ann Arbor Showing of “My Love Affair With Marriage”

Gary Schwartz emerged on the Zoom screen, near the end of the February coffee discussion, to share his experiences with the recent Ann Arbor showing of *My Love Affair With Marriage*, a multiple-layers-of-labor-of-love feature by Signe Baumann, nine years in the making. It has been getting a roadshow distribution across the country. Gary came away from the experience electrified, inspired, and infected with CoVid. “What do you expect - I was in a packed theatre surrounded by college students.”



Signe Baumann in Ann Arbor - Jan 2024



“My Love Affair With Marriage”

Buster Keaton: Home - First Festival Showing in Toronto

Another film with a protracted production, Jim Schaub's *Buster Keaton: Home* will



be having its festival premiere on April 11 at the Toronto International Film Festival, "one of the most prestigious and largest publicly attended film festivals in the world, founded in 1976." It operates out of the TIFF Lightbox Cultural Centre, in downtown Toronto.

The documentary covers the teen years of Buster Keaton in Muskegon, Michigan, with recollections by Muskegon historians, Keaton family members, and actors Carl Reiner and James Karen. Some newsletter editor in Edmore Michigan provided the animation. The film's trailer is at -

<http://www.busterkeatonhome.com/sneak-peek/> and the animated bits are still cluttering up Vimeo at - <https://vimeo.com/796085457>

Celebrating Valentine's Day



ASIFA Central Secretary Jim Middleton was given an assignment from family social coordinator Sparrow to build a Valentine's

Greeting for all her favorite humans - the result is two minutes you'll never get back: <https://vimeo.com/911926044>

David Lynch is 78 - he started with short films featuring animation, imagine that!

The Alphabet (1968) -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ_t1eOAipo



The phenomenon called ERASERHEAD

Public Domain Day Update

(notes

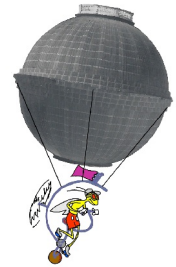
from a January 25th 2024 live presentation hosted by the Internet Archive)

In 2024, films from 1928 besides *Steamboat Willie* will be entering the public domain, and by year's end, all recordings from 1924 will be officially in the public domain (get out those first acoustic records of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* and go crazy). This means the *silent* version of MM's *Plane Crazy* is at your disposal, but frankly, let The Mouse Snooze at this point. *I Want to be Bad* from *Playin' Through* joins its sister melody *Button Up Your Overcoat* in the list, so it's time to get playful.

AI is a legal challenge still, for who owns the copyright on the created image - the text prompt creator or the software developer? Currently ownership leans toward the person with the paws on the keyboard, provided it is a person at the keyboard. It is strongly recommended to read any fine print when developing visual assets in using otherwise "free" software.

(Postscript: A use of public domain material - early recordings, outcast sound beds from RKO collections, Library of Congress images, stuff the cat dragged in, can be witnessed in *Political Asylum* from yr humbl typst - another 230 seconds you'll never get back

<https://vimeo.com/856397514>)



Notes from Animator's Education Forum and Accelerate Sessions - January, 2024

Jim Jones of the University of Colorado and Andrew Ames, currently in Pittsburgh, shared their experiences of building an animation program in the far-off-main campus basement lab that had once served as a prep room for the adjunct faculty. Hence, a main take-away from their discussion was - *The space is Important! The space must be accessible! The space is for exploration!*

However, a remote space does provide a certain level of autonomy from peering eyes and probing



inquiries. Their program was so remote, in fact, that one had to be enrolled in the production course to even discover that there *was* an animation lab. They enjoyed the luxury of “Benign Neglect” as a result, akin to the inhabitants of Termite Terrace at Warner’s during their Golden Age.

Students created and developed legacy material, researching and building artifacts that outlined how to animate with Legos, the use of iPhones vs DragonFrame, how broken parts of old action figures can be more interesting to use than the proscribed Legos...with a foundational approach of “first, do no harm.” (ὠφελέειν ἢ μὴ βλάπτειν - since this is referencing an academic environment).

Final “Best Practices” from this Animator’s Education Forum can be summed up thusly:

- make the animation lab accessible and expandable
- embrace non-animator students - the Colorado program included nursing students and those enrolled in curricula in sore need of creative, expressive outlets
- don’t be “gear snobs” – the tools don’t make the *animator* (a head’s up to AI)
- failures happen - embrace and share them!
- do things in small pieces
- prolong the “institutional memory”
- don’t chase waterfalls - develop *agile methodologies*
- *listen to the students; they’ll keep you current!!*

Besides yr humbl typst, those in attendance included animators from *Little Mermaid*, *Fergully*; educators from CalArts, the Netherlands, and San Jose.

Birgitta Hosea, of *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Animation Studies*, (www.birgittahosea.co.uk - and PLEASE check out her site if only for the

index page) moderated the *Accelerate Sessions* that sprang forth on January 21, which became an inspirational study on how to integrate animation with a live performance – **and** how to make both aspects of the stage event appear to be improvised. This is not an easy concept for animators to embrace, since several thousand drawings, filmed in a proscribed sequence, seem unlikely as an improvisational medium.

“Live performance allows for an ephemeral, reciprocal experience of the audience’s gaze.”

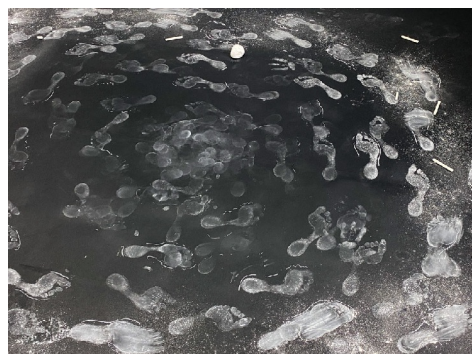
- a random voice recorded in yr humbl typst’s notebook

The spectrum of interactive performances extended to its origins in panoramas of the 18th and 19th centuries to the newer installations with names like “Effervescent Shadow Bazaar,” the multi-projection “Eventual Horizon,” fore-and-aft-illumination for “The Road With Trees,” triptychs inspired by Emily Dickinson, moving scrolls, shadow plays, scalloped diorama screens, organic construction of staged, visual masks, and the human body as a screen.

The participants described their performances as “jazz riffing,” an audio-visual collaboration, and finding joy within class activities that can be scaled to proportionally larger venues.


Their consensus was that with any such project, knowing the space before creating the performance is essential.

It was a breathless, robust 75 minutes with Rose Bond, Johannes DeYoung, and Miwa Matreyek. Their complete bios, with links to projects, is at <https://animateprojects.org/acceleratesessionlive/>



Walk Cycle (2021) - Birgitta Hosea

AWG, ASA and More Updates
from Deanna Morse
President, ASIFA International

 Educators have their own teaching approaches... our method combined ideas from 10 year old girls with our teacher-filmmaker ideas in a positive way. First, I need to say, we are part of an international initiative, where kids around the world make animations based on a common theme. This year, our theme was *Be Who You Want To Be*. That was why we organized this workshop.

We only had the kids for four hours. We introduced each other, and then started by brainstorming - kids made lists of who they want to be, what they are now, what they remember fondly from the past. Then we made color mood collages, tearing colors from magazines. Then each girl created a watercolor background inspired by their brainstorming, one each, and created the dolls.

The next session, we created a modest film storyboard from their brainstorming and backgrounds, which we discussed with the girls. We brought in props based on their brainstorming. They had some great ideas for improving the structure, which we incorporated.

Then, we shot the animation, and used the mood collages to create their name dots, and although we had a few more ideas for painstakingly slow frame by frame under the camera animation, we took a big break and played outside! Hey, it was a sunny day, and these are 10 year old girls!

Then, Jane (Flint) and I spent another two days editing the footage into this two-minute little hit of happiness. The girls love it. We do too. I think it captures a moment in time of the life of 10 years olds...

Here it is! -

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/913789793>



BUT WAIT!
THERE's MORE
from our International President!

Hi, ASIFA/Central friends -
First of all, I am going to Ann Arbor to be on the jury this year, and I will be screening my films on Wednesday March 27, 1 PM, Michigan Theater, free screening. I am calling it "Move-Click-Move."




Second, there is a new-ish initiative from ASIFA – the extended deadline is April 4 -- for an outstanding student film, with a \$1500 award.

(The material is attached to this newsletter)

Perhaps you have some student work to enter or offer?

***From Anastasia Dimitra, program coordinator,
ASIFA Student Award (ASA):***

 Hello, ASIFA Chapters – I kindly ask you to contribute to the *ASIFA Student Awards*, by:

(1) Sending student short animation films (length up to 10 minutes). We must have the director's written permission to include the films in a screening program from your country. The compilation will be shown around. (The written permission form is also attached to this

newsletter).

(2) Proposing a local festival that will cooperate with ASIFA to host the awards

The aim of this project is to encourage and support student creativity, geared for all students, even those who are not eligible to be members of ASIFA. This will promote awareness about the association. ASIFA should arrange events at Universities (art and animation faculties) and animation festivals in collaboration with local ASIFA chapters to promote ASA.

The selection committee and jury will be announced soon, as well as which festival shall be willing to host the ASA.

Competition guidelines

The directors can use any animation techniques they wish with aesthetical elements that characterize animation art, with an eye toward the future.

Entries must be student short films created or published after January 1, 2022.

Chapters may promote up to five student films.

No registration fee is required.

After completing the entry forms (attached), please submit them for consideration to:

anadimitral@gmail.com

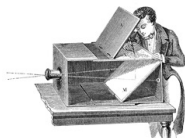
Submission deadline: April 4, 2024

The submitted films shall be available to all chapters for one year period of screenings.

All directors need to sign a contract (attached) with ASIFA that after the competition for the period of one year, ASIFA may use the films for screenings. ASIFA would send screening reports to all directors.

The ASA trophy is €/\$1,500 - and €/\$500 for the winner travel expenses.

(Again, the forms will be at the end of this newsletter as an attachment, and in the newsletter archive for February 2024)



Update from the West Coast:

The Annie Awards 2024

from the ASIFA-SF newsletter - editor, Karl Cohen

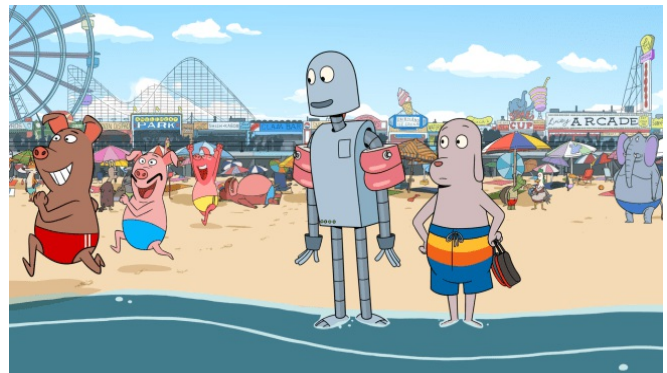


Across the Spider-Verse

Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse wins best commercial feature and *Robot Dreams* wins best independent feature at the Annie Awards. You can see the entire three-hour award ceremony online at <https://annieawards.org/winners>

Spider-Man: Across the Spider Verse was the biggest winner, both in applause and for winning all seven nominated categories (best commercial feature, FX, character design, direction, music, production design, and editorial).

Robot Dreams won best independent feature, and *War is Over!*, inspired by the music of John and Yoko was the best independent short. It also just won Spain's Goya Award for Best Animated Feature.



Robot Dreams

Hayao Miyazaki's *The Boy and the Heron* earned Annies for character animation and Miyazaki's storyboarding. It has won most of the critics' awards. It also just won the Best Animated feature at the BAFTA ceremony in the UK

ANNIE AWARDS 2024 (continued)

Nimona had nine Annie nominations and it won for voice acting and writing.

Three honorary Winsor McCay Awards were given. They went to legendary animator and director Charlotte “Lotte” Reiniger (posthumously), Studio Ghibli composer Joe Hisaishi; and National Film Board animator and producer Marcy Page.

The Ub Iwerks Award for technical advancement was awarded posthumously to John Oxberry for his developing and producing the Oxberry animation stand that was used for many decades to shoot cell animation.

Monthly Stats at the ASIFA.org Website

January 2024 - Visits 185, Views 300, and **TWO LIKES!** *A new website RECORD!*

Membership Renewal Notices

They’ll be going out this month, too, for applicable members. Woo! With the upcoming 50th anniversary celebration of ASIFA Central, and with membership getting all the self-promotional space it would like in that published celebration, perhaps a membership will be helpful in maintaining an Eternal Presence In Print (digital or otherwise) for the aeons to come.

Draft History of ASIFA and ASIFA Central for 50th Anniversary Celebration Book

(ok, so we’re a few months ahead! The next several iterations of this newsletter will contain “draft” versions of several sections for members to review and suggest edits. This will be the prelude to the Big Hoo-Ha Final Layout, at which point Yr Hmbl Typst will be in an undisclosed location, with soundproof walls, and little contact with the outside world...)

On ASIFA International - ASIFA International – A short history (info source: ASIFA.net)

ASIFA (Association Internationale du Film d'Animation) was founded in 1960 in Annecy, France. Renowned Canadian animator Norman McLaren (*Neighbors*, et al) was elected its first president. McLaren, John Halas and other founding members envisioned a world of peace and dialogue to settle international differences, with the art of animation serving as a bridge between different cultures and ideologies.

"Animation is not a religion; neither is it a political movement in any sense. It remains a true contemporary art form which has been unrecognized for what it can achieve... we consider animation as a universal expression which is capable of immense contribution if given a chance." /
– John Halas, President's Letter (1979)

Working with UNESCO, ASIFA strives to unite the animation world in peace by trying to find ways for animators to meet in person, originally from both sides of the Iron Curtain. The main goal of ASIFA is to share animation films and develop lasting international friendships. Technology is instrumental in creating at-distance links more immediate, with the potential for instantaneous exchange of ideas.

"I was sometimes asked to help out at international board meetings, sometimes taking minutes, sometimes (inexpertly) interpreting, and thus witnessing Cold War relationships up close. Despite mutual suspicion and frequent high drama, agreements were slowly thrashed out, film exchanges, visiting delegations and new festivals organized."

– Clare Kitson, ASIFA Member and second recipient of the Lotte Reiniger Achievement Award (2018)

The development of the ASIFA-China group in 1984 opened Chinese animation to the world and encouraged the Shanghai Animation Festival. Other chapters soon followed in Iran, South Korea, India, and Egypt, expanding the global reach of ASIFA. Recently, ASIFA has welcomed new chapters in Germany, Thailand, China-Xiamen and Lithuania. Now, with more than 40 chapters worldwide, this spirit of peace, love and tolerance continues to guide ASIFA.

"Sharing a common interest with a friend on the other side of the world will build bridges to a far-off community and give you the ability to talk through ideas and work together with someone who may have a completely different perspective on life. ASIFA wants you to find that friend and form the bonds that build strong communities within a global society."

– Ed Desroches,, ASIFA Colorado, and former ASIFA International President

ASIFA Target Goals:

ASIFA promotes opportunities for professionals in animation to share information and network globally through our publications and public communications.

ASIFA is concerned with sustaining and preserving the rights of animators and the art of animation by promoting, educating, cooperating, and assisting others.

ASIFA promotes progress toward peace and mutual understanding through the unified interest of the art of animation with workshops, gatherings, and worldwide projects.

ASIFA pursues these goals through a variety of activities both internationally and through local chapters.

ASIFA Central is proud to be among those worldwide chapters, and in 2024, is thrilled to note that member Deanna Morse is the current president of ASIFA International.

On ASIFA Central

(draft text, based on earlier histories with some updates)

ASIFA-Central was founded in Chicago in 1975 as an association of professional, independent, and student animators and has since expanded to encompass a larger regional area, becoming the Midwest USA Animation Chapter of ASIFA in the process. Members hail from Ohio to Oregon, from Michigan to Missouri, with occasional ambassadors from Europe and India.

Art Pierson was the first President, followed by David Daruszka, who helmed the chapter for over a dozen years. Deanna Morse served as President for many years, and was also elected to the international ASIFA board – first as a chapter representative, then International Vice-President, and finally President of ASIFA International. Bri Yarhouse, Jim Middleton, Marla Schweppe, and Randy Rockafellow were also chapter Presidents through the 1990s and the early 2000s. Julie Goldstein of Grand Rapids, Michigan is the current chapter President (2024).

Beyond these Presidents, several members have been indispensable for ASIFA Central activities over the decades, including Barry Young, Mary Lou Haynes, Jennifer Peterson, Jim Duesing, Gretchen Vinnedge, and Gordon Peterson. Our organization has been fortunate to have them among the many animators working as active volunteers over the years. When CoVid ravaged the social scenes, Michael Long of Missouri began a monthly “coffee break” to keep the scattered membership in touch.

In the early 1990's, ASIFA-Central became the first ASIFA chapter to create and post a website. Pioneer webmaster, Byron Grush, received several awards for the site, including an IWAY award, and a citation from Animation Magazine as "one of the top 15 organizations that make a difference." ASIFA.ORG continues to be an active repository of information and resources.

ASIFA-Central co-sponsored many programs over the decades and has brought in visiting animators including Don Bluth, June Foray, Gordon Sheehan, Ed Hooks, Chris Sullivan, Nina Paley, and Shamus Culhane. Calabash Animation and Big Idea shared their production pipeline methods with the Midwestern membership. For years, the chapter coordinated the judging of animation at the Chicago International Film Festival.

For over a decade, ASIFA-Central held annual weekend retreats at Starved Rock Lodge in Illinois and elsewhere in the Chicago area. More recent retreats were in conjunction with the SMart Festival (Grand Rapids) and the happily-ever-aftering known as KAFI (Kalamazoo Animation Festival International), the brainchild of ASIFA Central member David Baker that brightened the first decade of this century. Members have also participated in judging at area film festivals, with Deanna Morse being a frequent, welcome presence at the AAFF (Ann Arbor).

For many years, ASIFA-Central was closely affiliated with the HVH World Peace Storyboard Competition, which gave scholarships to students to create animations envisioning world peace. Animations created through this initiative were shared and screened internationally. Rita Dobias, who passed in 2022, was a noteworthy participant and chapter member.

Longtime chapter member Bri Yarhouse has become closely associated with International Animation Day, and now serves as its International coordinator, continuing the heritage of celebration each October.

Our active membership is continuously creating, educating, and promoting the animation field, establishing international links and lasting friendships with every journey or shared video screen. This modest publication champions their stories and accomplishments – to inspire others and fulfill one of the undersung missions of ASIFA:

“Animation Unites Us.”
– *animationem coniungit* –

It has been quite a 50 year ride, but the “old timers” are always thrilled to have new generations come and play in their yards.

ASIFA Central Newsletter (cc) late-February, 2024, a quarterly-ish publication of ASIFA Central - see the updated website with more announcements **and an ever expanding newsletter archive** for ASIFA Central at - <https://asifa.org>

ANIMATION UNITES US

ASIFA Central On INSTAGRAM! Woot Woot! Make sure to check our newly created Instagram account: <https://www.instagram.com/asifacentral/>

ANIMATION UNITES US

And then dive into more digital fun at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/asifacentral> and for ASIFA International - <https://asifa.net> - be sure to check out the Facebook page on ANIZOOMATION

ANIMATION UNITES US

As usual, send any suggestions, comments, or recipes for zucchini bread, along with the usual castigations to yr hmbl typist, at jim.middletonrx@gmail.com or, for dull bloggery, <https://animatingapothecary.blogspot.com>

ANIMATION UNITES US

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the hmbl typst and do not necessarily reflect the thoughts, opinions, or policies of anyone anywhere else, and especially at ASIFA Central, which is a completely volunteer-run, non-profit gathering of very busy and frantic members moving at 24fps on a slow day, where vacations are when you shoot on twos.

Press releases are always welcome! We encourage shameless self-promotion!

ALSO NOTE

As the 50 year anniversary of ASIFA Central approaches, feel free to offer suggestions for material for the commemorative book (or booklet). The contact is yr hmbl typst, at jim.middletonrx@gmail.com

