

SUMMER 2001



FRAME
↓
FRAME

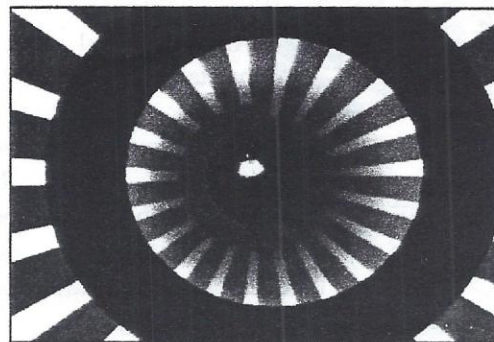
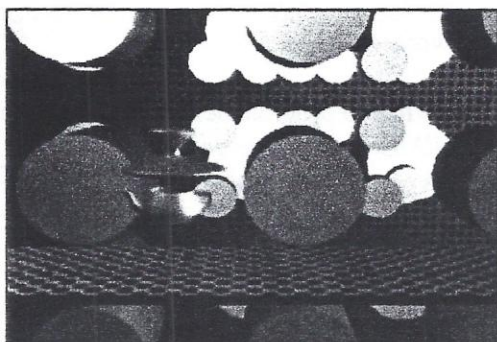
A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF ASIFA/Central

SUMMER 2001

Postmortem of my 3D animated film "Stuyvesant". by Randall Rockafellow

Stuyvesant embodies the simple rule of life that at any moment life can happen and happen in a very unexpected and emotional way. The 3D animated film was brought to life starting back at the 9th annual ASIFA Animators' conference and retreat, April 2001. I didn't know it at the time but fellow

The CD first collected dust for a couple of weeks until I got my upgrade to discreets 3ds max 4. Around the beginning of June I ripped the CD music to the .wav file format and imported it into 3ds max 4. From there it was I just animating straight-ahead and making up the basic scene and action as I



ASIFA member Jim Middleton was to set the film in motion. During his presentation on Copyright law and the wonderful world of public domain music he handed out to the attendees a CD full of music recorded in 1920's or earlier. The music to be the inspiration for the film.

went? There wasn't a storyboard or concept sketches I just wanted to fill action to the music. As I went along the story just worked itself into the piece. I figured the rough animation would be better than a storyboard for the type of simple film I had in mind. It

Stuyvesant (Rockafellow) continued on 9

Making of A DVD: DVD Premiere Party!

by Deanna Morse

We're in final production of a retrospective DVD of my film and video work. And we're planning the premiere party! You are all invited!

BACKGROUND

I've been in intensive production over the past several months. For me, it's been different production than my regular animated films. I was approached by Ed Anderson from Trillion Digital in Grand Rapids, MI (www.trilliondigital.com), who offered to compile and publish a retrospective of my film and video work on a DVD. Ed made this offer because he has seen me give public presentations of my video work, where I show slides, talk, and screen my short animation and

experimental video pieces. Ed felt that DVD presentations, with their potential for interactivity would provide more flexibility, put all my media on one disc, and offer technically a higher quality viewing experience. He was also interested in having a piece that Trillion could use to showcase their DVD design and authoring talents. He offered to do it for free during times when the company was between clients. We've been working on this project on and off for about two and a half years.

Right now the project is in the final stretch - everything is in California, at the replicators, who are pressing the discs, putting in the cover insert, assembling the case with a 6 panel insert booklet, and shrink wrapping the whole thing. We're anticipating final delivery in two weeks.

Inside this Issue
Making of a DVD
Letter from the President
and more ...

MY FIRST STEPS

I dug in my shelves and closet, found the best copies of my films and videos, and arranged for transfer to beta. In two cases, on
Making of a DVD (Morse) continued on 3

Letter from the Editor *by Jennifer Eldred*



As summer draws to an end, it's time to get back to the business of connecting animators in the midwest. I admit of late that ASIFA/Central has taken a back burner, edged out

by the lazy days of summer, but now as the weather turns cooler, it's time for ASIFA/Central members to take an active roll in their organization. One way is to take a moment and read the bios of the people who are running for board and other key positions in this organization. These bios start on page 5. An election ballot is also included in this edition. While there isn't much competition between board positions, you still

have the right to cast a vote, so when you get your ballot, please send it in and let us know what you think. We are only as good as our most dedicated members and we are lucky to have very talented people interested in working for ASIFA/Central. That is exciting!

Cast your vote today!

I would also like to promote next year's ASIFA/Central Conference and Retreat. It is our 10th Annual and will be held from April 26-28, 2002. This conference is a very big deal. Check out the details on page 6.

If you are interested in submitting an article for the Fall 2001 edition the deadline is **October 15**.

Jennifer Eldred

Animation Scholarship Available

Each year, the Haynes Storyboard & Animation Scholarship program awards a \$1,000 grant to one qualified student attending an accredited college or university by sponsoring a Storyboard Competition.

The money, contributed by the family & friends of the late Helen Victoria Haynes - former bilingual teacher, musician and church activist - defrays the cost of producing an animated PSA based on the theme 'How We Can Achieve World Peace'. College students anywhere in the

world are eligible. The deadline for applying with a Storyboard is **March 15, 2002**.

Winner will be announced in April. Winner is required to complete the PSA for screening at the 11th Annual Midwest Animators Conference in April 2003.

For an application with rules, send an email containing your postal address to: Program Director, HVH World Peace Storyboard & Animation Scholarship Competition morgpk@aol.com

ASIFA/Central Volunteers and Project Leaders

Newsletter Designer/Editor & Vice President

Jennifer Eldred, eldredj@usa.net

President / Webmaster / Membership Coordinator

Randall Rockafellow
rockafellow2@juno.com

Treasurer

Deanna Morse, morsed@gvsu.edu

Reel Coordinator

Jim Schaub, jimschaub@aol.com

Conference Chair 2002 Storyboard Contest

Mary Lou Haynes, morgpk@aol.com

Conference Co-Chair 2002

Dave Daruszka

Web site:

<http://www.asifa.org/animate>

E-mail: asifa@asifa.org

ASIFA/Central Conference:

April 26 - April 28, 2002

To contribute or volunteer contact:

Randy Rockafellow

E-mail: rockafellow2@juno.com

To join ASIFA/Central:

Send a check (payable in US dollars to ASIFA/Central) to the address on the back of this newsletter.

***The deadline for the
Fall 2001 Edition of
Frame by Frame is
October 15, 2001.***

ASIFA/Central Mission Statement
ASIFA: Association Internationale du Film d'Animation

The purpose of ASIFA/Central is to promote the art of animation locally and internationally and to promote communication among animators and between animators and devotees. - adopted 3/92

Printed in the U.S.A on recycled paper.

Loosemore Auditorium
DeVos Center on the
Grand Rapids Pew Campus
Grand Valley State University
401 West Fulton Street
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Parking: Watson lot behind Secchia Hall entrance on Winter St.

If you cannot make the party, but you want to purchase a DVD, send a check for \$24. to Deanna Morse, School of Communications, 268 LSH, GVSU, Allendale, MI 49401. Please make check payable to Grand Valley State

University.

email for more information: morsed@gvsu.edu

Deanna Morse is an artist/ animator and a Professor in the School of Communications at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, MI. She has been producing films for some thirty years and her work is represented in a variety of collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She is currently treasurer of ASIFA/Central.

ASIFA/Central 2002 Board Position Nominees

Nominee for President

Jim Middleton: I am tossing my drawing disc into the ring to run for president of ASIFA Central.

Animation, whether in its viewing or execution, has been one of my primary sources of solace since attempting my first film at age 13. I have been fortunate to be a member of ASIFA since 1984, and my life has been enriched by the friendships and associations I have made since then. I have found methods of expressing my training as a pharmacist into the language of animation, to my personal delight, if to the occasional confusion of pharmacists (not a group known for flights of fancy), and with no further stimulation to the nervous system than caffeine. Lots of caffeine.

My goals for ASIFA Central are to continue its role as advocate for animation and to promote the exposure of the amazing work being created by its members. Whether this is done by newsletter articles, seminars, retreats, or festivals will depend on available resources; the ASIFA Central website is an incredible resource that deserves our continued support and interactive participation. Increasing the exposure of membership's efforts can only stimulate further interest in animation in general, and in ASIFA Central in particular. With these destinations in sight, we will continue to grow, have greater interaction among members, learn from our technical misadventures, and share the plain, flat-out fun borne by those bitten by the animation bug.

Bio: Jim Middleton, pharmacist, instructor, and animator, has been imbedded in the Surreal City of Battle Creek long enough to remember when it actually made corn flakes. He has produced over a dozen animated shorts that have earned international

recognition and has been involved in productions for the Chicago Sports Channel, A & E, and local cable networks. Presently he is at work on two animation projects, one of them actually representing a paycheck. He consults for several psychiatric health organizations and teaches pharmacology to the bewildered nursing and dental hygiene students at Kellogg Community College. Anyone spending more than 12 minutes at his home will be forced to see some of his animation. He has been quoted as saying, "If the future doesn't have cookies, I don't want to go." We think he drinks too much coffee.

Nominee for Vice President & Newsletter Editor

Jennifer Eldred: I am the current Vice President and Newsletter Editor for ASIFA/Central and would like to continue in my current roles through 2002.

I have been an ASIFA/Central member since 1995 and Newsletter Editor and Vice President since 1997. My goals over the coming year are to take the newsletter online to electronic publication for our online members. As Vice President I will remain an active voice either through publication or direct correspondence with the President. I have every intention of seeing ASIFA/Central grow and prosper in 2002.

As an animator, I have created several children's animation pieces. I currently work as a New Media Designer and Project Manager for C2 Media Production Group in Grandville, Michigan.

Nominee for Webmaster

Charles Wilson: Location: East Lansing, Michigan;
Years in ASIFA: 2

INTERNET EXPERIENCE: Website and e-

Nominees continued on 6

commerce site designer/ programmer since 1996. Experienced in HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Java, CGI, Perl, C/C++, Lotus Domino, ActiveX, JPEG/Gif89a, Macromedia Flash and Macromedia Director/ ShockWave. Currently engaged in advanced study of the following technologies for my day job: XML, DHTML, IBM WebSphere.

ENHANCEMENTS THAT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE MADE TO OUR CURRENT ASIFA CENTRAL WEBSITE

When reviewing our current website, I evaluated it from the following perspectives:

1. When I look at the site, what reasons can I come up with that would make me want to join ASIFA Central?
2. If I'm a member of ASIFA Central, how can this website help me grow as an artist and foster a sense of community among animators?
3. If I'm going to become a corporate sponsor, what are the benefits that sponsorship will hold for my company?

I came up with the following answers:

FUNCTIONAL CHANGES

1. Add online animation discussion forums covering various topics (techniques, current events, film reviews.
2. Need shorter site update time when member material is received.
3. Must make it easier to navigate through the website and find relevant information.
4. When I enter www.asifa.org into a web browser, the browser is automatically redirected to www.swcp.com. This shouldn't happen. It will confuse visitors and give the impression that our site is unavailable for technical reasons.

CONTENT

1. I want to display more artwork, animations, and articles from ASIFA Central members.
2. I want to archive all frame-by-frame newsletters and make them available in PDF format on the website.
3. Weekly updates as to what's going on in the animation community would be nice (festival info, animated movie openings, DVD releases, etc).
4. We need resources to help animators (links to relevant sites--copyright info, unions, book reviews, colleges, animation tools/software/art supplies. I'm still working on how to make the site more

alluring for corporate sponsors, but that will be a good challenge for after I've tackled the first eight tasks.

From what you've read, I hope that everyone believes that I'm the right man for the job. But even if you choose someone else, I've got lots of ideas, technical experience, and the desire to hear everyone's ideas on how to make ASIFA Central an example for the other ASIFA chapters to follow. I would appreciate the opportunity to manage our website, but I will be just as happy being a valuable resource for the person you do choose for the job. Thank you,
Charles

Nominee for Member Directory Coordinator *Randall Rockafellow*

Randall Rockafellow is a freelance 3D animator through his company Rock-A-Fellow Media. In addition he serves as a part-time instructor at the College for Creative Studies. Attended his first ASIFA Central Animators' Conference in 1997 and soon thereafter took over webmaster duties for ASIFA Central. In 2000 Randy became the current President. Randy is filling in as the Member Directory Coordinator left vacant at 2001 Conference.

Nominee for Treasurer *Deanna Morse*

I would like to run for Treasurer of ASIFA/Central. I have served as Treasurer for the past several years, and formerly as President and Membership Chairperson (for somewhat over a decade). In addition, I served a three-year term on the international ASIFA board.

My goals for ASIFA/Central are to support and maintain the level of involvement that we have at present. We have an active website, which, as the first ASIFA site on the web continues to receive much attention. Our annual retreat is a great weekend of camaraderie, networking and education.

Our newsletter provides tangible information about the organization, and is a valuable benefit for our members. All of this serves to maintain a midwest USA presence in ASIFA.

As treasurer and board member, I will help to support these activities. As treasurer, I will keep a balanced budget for our group.

Bio: An artist specializing in animation and personal short films and videos, Deanna Morse has produced over thirty films and videos since the early

Making of a DVD (Morse) continued from 1

old films, I replaced the original music tracks, to use cleared and legal music.

This first step was a bit difficult. Since I am continually in production, at various stages on a few projects, it was hard to think that my newer work wouldn't be included. It was difficult to think of having to make a "stopping point" with my films. In the past, I had made a few video compilations, but these always seemed more fluid. I could add a title, delete a title, reorganize my work. It was difficult to have to commit to the finality of putting the work on a mastered DVD. I hurried to finish two projects for inclusion. We ended up creating some new material just for the DVD: an overview table of contents, and a "signature" piece with time-lapse of animation intercut with the final films segments.

During the production, I worked closely with Trillion employee (and ASIFA/Central member) Eric Oehrl. Eric set deadlines, kept the project moving, and did the encoding and authoring for the DVD. He brought in graphic designer Grey Christian (Grey/Berlin Design Studio) to design the interface. I recently realized that Eric was serving as producer, although when we were in production, it felt like collaboration. (This is probably the mark of a good producer!)

I began thinking about how to organize thirty years of films and videos for the DVD. I made a notecard for each title, and juggled the stacks to try to find common threads or themes.

We ended up including 36 short films, over two hundred production stills with captions, five storyboard to film comparisons, and interactive and animated motion menus. The total video running time is over 2 1/2 hours.

We ended up not including my dance-film collaborations, a few shorts, and some early work.

INTERFACE METAPHOR

We decided to use the desktop metaphor to help visually organize the films. The films are grouped into 8 sections: Fun Shorts!, More Fun Stuff!, Dreams and Visions, Handspeak, Early Films, Visual Poems, Commercial Stuff and Introduction. Each of these has little objects or drawings to represent it.

These are spread over what appears to be a very large cluttered artists' desk. In the center is the main menu, with a clipboard list for each of the areas. If the clipboard was the actual size, the desk would be at least 20 feet long. Now that would be a good animator's work space!

Grey and Eric scanned many objects and images from the films, and cleaned up the edges in Photoshop. Grey resized and placed the objects, added shadows and basically built the huge and cluttered virtual desktop. The desktop has is a bit like my desk: with papers, drawings, shells, leaves, trinkets, and souvenirs.

Later, Eric drew highlight boxes around objects on the desktop which defined the areas for interactivity, and programmed it so that the viewer could jump from choice to

choice, from film to film, from section to section.

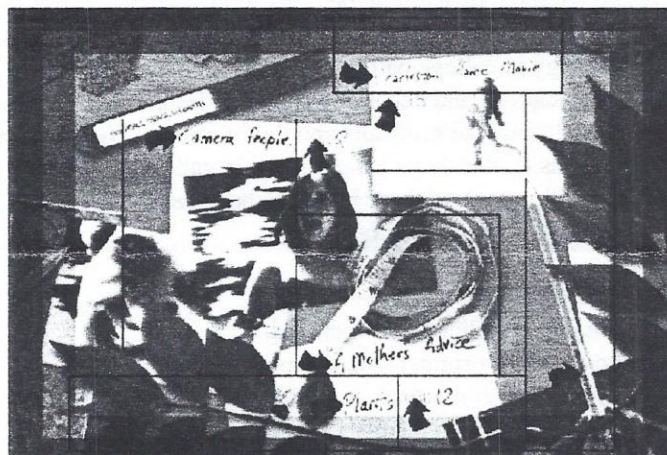
TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience is educators and students who want to learn or teach animation. A primary goal of the project is that viewers will see that anyone can animate, using simple tools, if they just have the patience to do it. It does not take a giant company with teams of folks and big budgets to speak with this medium.

The DVD includes four films with "angles": a technical possibility unique to DVDs. In these four films, the viewer can press the angle button on their DVD remote controller to toggle between the original storyboard and the finished animation.

More than half of the films include production stills with captions: behind the scenes comments on how the work was produced and animated.

My films include many collaborative efforts. There is work made with school children when I was an Artist in the Schools in South Carolina, films made with other artists, there



are shorts animated for children and for Sesame Street. There are many personal film shorts. Somewhat like visual poems, my films explore place, dreams, and memories. It's a wide variety of work. Some has been screened in museums, some in festivals, some on public television, some on commercial and cable television.

There are several animation techniques represented in my work: cut-out, cel, model animation, computer supported animation, and 3-D animation. The experimental films include documentary approaches and optical printing. The production stills/captions often describe challenges or elements distinctive to working in these various techniques.

THE SURPRISES

I was surprised by the animations that Grey came up with to enhance the interface.

My animations often use cut-out and object animation. Grey was a computer animator, but he had never worked with traditional methods. At one point in the scanning,

Making of a DVD (Morse) continued from 3

inspired by my under-the-camera animations, he decided to do an object animation himself, and he twirled a doll in a box: move-click-move-click. Eric, Grey and I were delighted by how alive it was, and thought we should include it on the DVD as a surprise. Later, Grey decided to make little surprises for each section. The animation of these was so fun that we didn't want to hide them, so we foregrounded these in each section. Eric suggested adding an audio bed that included matched sound for these animations. Over this summer, we worked to add audio elements to each of the desktop animations.

Adding the audio brought a new set of surprises for me. I had seen several DVDs that had annoying sound tracks on their menus. I decided that I wanted to use nature sounds and bird noises as the background audio bed. Sound designer Joe McCargar (from River City Studios) offered to assist me with digitizing and building these audio elements. The first day I went to work with him, I played some of the tracks, and he surprised me by naming the birds, "Oh, there's a Robin. A Flicker. Cardinal." It turns out that Joe had studies Ornithology in college before changing his major to Communications and becoming an audio designer! He had a wonderful sense for bird calls and their timings. We designed the sections to each have a highlight bird call on it. Astute birders will recognize these highlight birds as they wander through my oversize desktop!

TECHNICAL PROCESS

The basic step of this DVD included:

- Generating the original video/film materials
- Cleaning up that material as needed, technical fixes
- Transferring to high quality video for encoding into the computer
- Organizing the material into sections: determining all elements of the final project
- Developing a bit budget for the project (how much material, what size disc is required)
- Encoding the video from analog to digital
- Scanning slides and graphics for the production stills
- Scanning storyboards for the "angles"
- Laying storyboards to video, matching timing with finished production
- Designing the interface
- Generating the visual elements of the interface, scanning and cleaning up those elements
- Production of the graphic interface (including layout, resizing, adding shadows)
- Grant writing to support the costs of commercial replication
- Writing captions for the production stills
- Testing captions, and production stills
- Determining the interactivity.
- Programming the interactivity.
- Programming other elements: angles, captions, chapter stops.

- Testing the discs for bugs and errors.
- Transferring all materials to DLT for replication.
- Designing the DVD disc graphic.
- Writing and designing the booklet for insert.
- Writing and designing the cover for the disc package.
- Planning for the Premiere Celebration Party.

THE HOME STRETCH

When the DVD was initiated, we had thought about pressing only one copy for me to use in presentations. But it turned out that with this quantity of material, when Eric did a "bit budget", the movies wouldn't fit at high quality. So we decided to go for a commercial pressing, and I began some grant writing to support it. I received funding from my University, and Digital Video Services in Grand Rapids, Michigan (www.dvs.cc) offered me a nice discount that allowed us to undertake the commercial pressing.

In the most positive spirit of collaboration, this project for me felt like many people came to it with the best they had to offer: they shared their art, they shared their skills, they shared their strengths. I feel honored by their gifts, and the final DVD, I feel, reveals this positive energy.

Only a few people have seen the test discs. The response to this project has been overwhelmingly positive. When you rent a DVD from the video store, you just put it in and it "plays", but this project is different. With the many choices, and short films, it is by nature INTERACTIVE. The viewer makes choices, selects what s/he wants to explore.

The motion menus make the desktop come alive. You feel that you are in an animated world, with nature and bird sounds surrounding you, and surprising little elements on the desktop come alive. But the experience feels grounded in reality: the elements look physical, the desktop looks like a desktop, the objects look real.

For me, this DVD is a wonderful gift. It has its own life: it created an animated and interactive world for my animations to live in.

The disc is currently in replication. In a few weeks we will have them, ready for the premiere. You can own one for only \$24.1 (\$20. + \$4 shipping and handling). Proceeds from the sales will go into a scholarship fund at my University.

And - we're having a DVD Debut party! If you are near Michigan, mark your calendars:

DVD Debut Party for the premiere of move-click-move Animated and Experimental Films by Deanna Morse

Thursday, November 15, 2001

6:30 Program

7:30 -9:00 Reception

Making of a DVD (Morse) continued on 5

Stuyvesant (Rockafellow) continued from 1

ended up working well as a launching point for the next round

The film was produced in much the same way you write a paper. I roughly animated all the shots to the music without doing complex modeling; surfacing and lighting beyond the defaults which resulted in a rough draft. Next I took all the shots into a non-linear editor and put all the shots together to get a feel for the over-all film. Here's where I made decisions on what shots to keep and which ones needed to be reworked. At this stage I felt I had accomplished a lot and got a glimmer at what the final product was going to be. It also was less daunting to work with rough shots then to begin and create entire new shots from the ground up. The other thing that helped me to finish the film was a looming June 29th deadline for the SEMAFX film festival (learn more about SEMAFX at semafx.com). I am the type of person that needs the motivation of a due date to really produce and 3 days before the due date I really turned it on. The last three days were mostly surfacing and lighting. The scenes really came to life once the models were surfaced and with lighting to the depth and mood to the piece. I was happy with how it all came together on the last days of the project.

The end result is a fun muscial cartoony romp that sweeps up the audience and carries them swiftly til then end of the minute long musical adventure. I enjoy the film because all the 3D we see today has incredibly complex worlds and characters all pushing a surreal reality and "Stuvesant" is a dose of something different. The only drawback as a filmmaker of a finished film is that envitable you always notice minor glitches or annoyances that weren't clear until after it was done. But I suppose when your not satisfied that's how you know your ready to make another film. Currently I am submitting the film to various film festivals to share iStuyvesanti with others.

Randall Rockafellow is the current ASIFA Central President. He does freelance animation through his company Rock-A-Fellow Media and is a part-time instructor for Center for Creative Studies, Detroit, Michigan. Contact him at rrockafellow2@juno.com

Calendar of Events 2001-2002

Ottawa Animation Festival
October 18-21, 2001
www.awn.com/ottawa

ASIFA/Central
Conference & Retreat
April 26-28, 2002
<http://www.asifa.org/animate>

In Remembrance of Lily Brierton

Dear Friends:

I am writing to let you all know that on Saturday, Sept. 1, my lovely wife Lily passed away from complications due to pancreatic cancer. She died peacefully, in my arms, surrounded by her loved ones and family. She had been diagnosed with diabetes last October, but her cancer wasn't officially diagnosed until the middle of June. As you all were acquainted with her through ASIFA, I wanted to let you all know.

Lily was a wonderful woman, and was loved by many people; more people than I ever thought. I have been inundated with e-mails, cards, and letters letting me know how her kindness, unconditional love for others, infectious laughter and smile touched so many. I will miss her dearly. She is now an angel in heaven, watching over me as I live out the rest of my own life, til it comes time for me to join her.

Tom Brierton

If you would like to send Tom a letter or card of condolence please address it to:

2418 W. Coyle
Chicago, IL. 60645

Durango Film Festival

The second Durango Film Festival will take place in the historic Rocky Mountain town of Durango, Colorado, March 1-10, 2002.

Further information, application forms and rules for entry can be found at <http://www.durangofilmfestival.com/>