

## First 2025 Newsletter for ASIFA Central

Yule Tied 2024-2025

January

"IN VISIONIS PERTINACIA CONFIDIMUS!"

MMXXV<sup>AoDi</sup>

### **The ASIFA Central Board**

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

President

**Julie Goldstein**

Vice President

**Christopher Sagovac**

Treasurer and International IAD  
Coordinator

**Bri Yarhouse**

Social Media Coordinator and  
Chapter Ambassador:

**Tracy Miller-Robbins**

**Josh Harrell**

Secretary, Yr Hmbl 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**



## ASIFA INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATES ITS 65<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY IN 2025



**"IT IS IN THE MINDS OF MEN AND WOMEN THAT PEACE  
MUST BE BUILT" Declared Founders at UNESCO in 1960:  
What a Good Time for a Reminder**



From the New Year Greeting for 2025 by ASIFA International IAD coordinator, Bri Yarhouse:

"Today, there are over 28 armed conflicts that are occurring across the globe. How do we as an organization respond? When the Association Internationale du Film d'Animation (ASIFA) was chartered in 1960 it was partly in response to a world at war. Provisioned under UNESCO, Peace has been one of the tenets of interchange between animators and our differing cultures.

"Inspired by Russian Animators who spoke out against war with Ukraine, we want to promote Peace everywhere. No matter what you believe or how you disagree with one another, violence and killing is not the answer. All creatures have the right to live in peace."

"Animators from around the world of all ages will be invited to contribute 8-11 second short films on the subject of peace. Short films will be shown through a variety of venues including streaming. A curated collection will be offered for IAD 2025.

"Deadline for short films will be September 1, 2025. This allows time for workshops this summer."



Technical Details on page TWO! ➡➡➡


### *Technical Details for ASIFA International Peace Short Film Project*

- ☐ Pixel dimensions should be either 1920 x 1080 (HD) or 3840 x 2160 (4K UHD)
- ☐ H.264 compression.
- ☐ Credits should not be embedded in the short film but provided separately.
- ☐ Animators have the option of being anonymous to reflect the potential personal danger of being targeted.
- ☐ Each short should end with the word “Peace” in the personal language of the animator.
- ☐ Animations must include their own sound and be royalty free and able to be shown without restrictions.
- ☐ Animators must agree to the Creative Commons licensing: CC BY NC ND 4.0.
- ☐ Content is subject to the animators choice but must be a response to our theme of peace in the world, however they interpret this.
- ☐ ASIFA is not responsible for the content.

Films will be integrated with the 2025 IAD festivities.

Bri Yarhouse at Interlochen is already inspiring her students with animated contributions. The 65th anniversary poster will share a celebration of peace along with ASIFA International! More details in the weeks ahead! Stay tuned!

### **ASIFA CENTRAL CELEBRATES ITS 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY IN 2025 AS WELL!**

 And yes, even ASIFA Central is entering *its* golden years - 2025 marks fifty years since the birth of the ASIFA Central chapter in Chicago, amid fanfare, nonprofit paperwork, showings of actual FILM WITH SPROCKETS, and creation of *Frame By Frame*, the first official animation communication from *The Windy City* to the entire *WORLD*.

In 1975, land masses shifted, buildings quaked, Acme paper crinkled, Oxberrys flew everywhere, artists surfed the Chicago river, and the accounts of self-trained animators *shooting on twos* shocked the midwest.

This year will be marked by celebrations, retreats, showings, IAD, and a commemorative book with occasionally accurate tales of mystery and magnetic pole bending. If the sun seems to rise in the West and stay there, looking lost, you'll know the party is still going on. need to notify the authorities, unless of course, they have really, *really* good recipes for zucchini bread. And oh, how animators can *zucchini*!



### **AND A STILL SPECIAL, INCREDIBLE OFFER FROM THE GANG AT ASIFA SF:**



Karl Cohen says HI!

ASIFA-SF, among the many chapters of *Association Internationale du Film d'Animation*, had hopes for a rebound with live events once the CoVid threat had passed, but according to its newsletter editor, Karl Cohen, “that isn’t happening yet.” To emphasize the sincerity of their convictions, they have added this notice in their October newsletter, requesting me to share with our members:

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

Contact [karlcohen@earthlink.net](mailto:karlcohen@earthlink.net) and get your name on his monthly digital tome - often running over 20 pages (yr hmb! typst is honored to be among his proofreaders). Karl has connections *and* stories. He is author of *Forbidden Animation*, a frequent contributor to *Animation* magazine, the recipient of the ASIFA International Prize in 2008, and is nearing completion of a sweeping history of the societal impact of animation.

## *A Note from ASIFA Korea Chapter President, Nelson Shin*

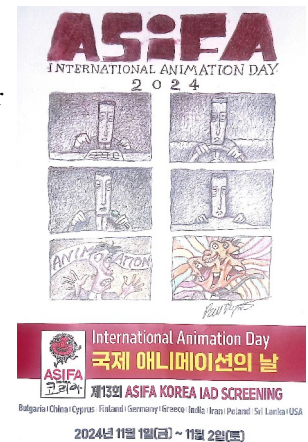


Thanks to contributors whose wonderful films for IAD 2024, helped us successfully wrap up the event by ASIFA Korea on November 1 and 2, 2024.

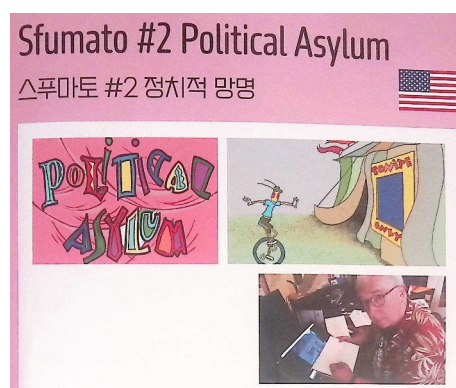
We had 54 films from 11 countries – Bulgaria, China, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Greece, India, Iran, Sri Lanka, Poland and USA (Central, East & South), divided them into four public screenings, free of charge, at the Nelson SHIN Animation-Art Museum.

More than 120 people – including professors, students, animation professionals – joined the general audience.

We produced and shared a catalogue of the showings with the audience and interested filmmakers.



Gary Schwartz



Jim Middleton



Chris Sagovac

## *And Time for the Seasonal Update from ASIFA International's President, Deanna Morse - An Active 2024*

### ACTIVITIES

From all accounts, we had a robust International Animation Day, with varied initiatives and programs around the world. We arranged in-person ASIFA gatherings at partner festivals – Stuttgart, Zagreb, Annecy, Ottawa, Cinanima, and others. At festivals, we distributed more ASIFA Postcards, and are planning another postcard gallery in 2025. A call for art will come at the start of the year. At Stuttgart, we presented the ASIFA Prize to Michaela Pavlatova. Thanks to Agnes Li and Annegret Richter for coordinating.

At Cinanima, ASIFA was represented with a program of Animations for Freedom., curated by Thomas Renoldner and a program from the Xiamen Animation Festival, presented by Johnchill Li.

We have a new proposed ASIFA Chapter - ASIFA Mongolia. Welcome!

And, in this past year, we have several new ASIFA Board members. Also, welcome!



Michaela Pavlatova

### INFORMATIONAL VIDEO

For festivals and IAD, we created a snappy ASIFA overview video to introduce our activities. It is 6 1/2 minutes - feel free to use it!

It is on asifa.net, [www.deannamorse.com/community](http://www.deannamorse.com/community), or here - [www.vimeo.com/954009443](https://www.vimeo.com/954009443)

### 2025 PLANS

The Executive Board and Anniversary Committees are both meeting soon. The EB is discussing our upcoming General Assembly in 2025, financial reports, chapter communication, new chapters, and more. The 65th (anniversary) planning



group has been meeting monthly, and has chosen our Anniversary Logo.

The committee will present concrete ideas to you soon. But, here are some of the things we have been discussing – We are planning to print some postcards, and also upload the 65th logo design for chapters to create their own. We want to encourage students to create an animated logo from the chosen design, with a themed challenge for IAD and AWG, potentially: “living in a peaceful world.” Establishing designated awards at festivals, an expanded ASIFA Student award, curated retrospective programs to offer to festivals and chapters, a special edition of ASIFA Academic Magazine celebrating the 65th Anniversary, and some discussion of how to recognize important ASIFA members, both old and new.

If you have input on these ideas, please let us know.

*THANK YOU.....*

I am thankful for you, for this global community of animation artists who believe that there is power in connecting with each other, across borders, to share our love of the art of animation, building bridges across cultures, to seek mutual understanding, working for peace and tolerance.

I am thankful that ASIFA will celebrate our long heritage next year recognizing that we are 65 years young, honoring our past, and moving forward with new ideas and initiatives.

In peace,  
Deanna Morse  
President, ASIFA



### ***The ASIFA Central COFFEE BREAKS***

*and Incredible Links Therein from November 2024 through January 2025*



amid the monthly coffee break sessions, generously hosted by **Michael Long** of Webster University, there are always lively discussions on animation topics and the challenges facing everyone in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Zoom *chat* is always a robust depository of suggested links and commentary, and we have even figured out how to copy and preserve that material to share with our extended membership and enthusiastic readers. Mr. Long offered this observation on animation, to wit: It is “the light of micropleasures in drawing movements.”

**David Thrasher** continues to celebrate the very event itself with the ongoing evolution of his bumper film, *Let's Go To the Coffee!*

[https://youtu.be/gkw\\_iWww8\\_Y?si=kTRPqtBQJTIG\\_Zep](https://youtu.be/gkw_iWww8_Y?si=kTRPqtBQJTIG_Zep)

In working with his 3D project, he also uncovered The Horrors of Early CGI

<https://youtu.be/XyGfxCxnZW0?si=JVRaVuJGUtVVY7O1>

...and someone's postulated cause of the sinking of the Titanic

<https://youtu.be/gFNoYlAVtTI?si=48q9Oxzo6hi74PE1>

And helpful tutorials for the ever-changing world of Blender (not the *Futurama* character):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogs7OTQBjwU> - make a frog!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXg5ucthFYE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaOEsAOnq7s>

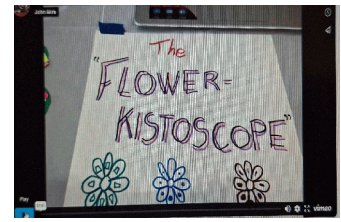
ASIFA Central's Anijam for IAD - <https://vimeo.com/1019263673> - much of it created during the retreat of September 7<sup>th</sup> in 2024





*Collage in Motion - J Akre*

We welcomed **John Akre** - <https://johnakre.com/> - in November, with his incredible collection of online material, 16mm hand-drawn shorts, stop-motion, flower-kistascopes, projects with Legos, masking tape, post-it notes, now in Louisville, KY from the land of his nativity in Minneapolis. This led to discussions of the dazzling work of Marie Paccou, cave art, oil lamp illusions, and J. Stuart Blackton. So, of course, we had links!

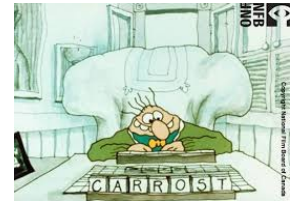


Easily discovered was the prolific **Marie Paccou** and her Animated Zoetrope Umbrella, ever prepared for *quand it pleut*: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=262303909045732> - and her home site continues to amaze with her repurposed paperbacks-into-flipbooks - <https://mariepaccou.com/index.php?mode=qui>

And then came the recollection of the early days of short films between HBO feature showings, some sneaking in before they made it to the festival circuits in some mysterious, pre-streaming, process:

*The Big Snit* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKmAph46JXk> ("Wal, blow my lips off!")

*The Cat Came Back* - 1988 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ck0jwS0CvKk>



*In December, we fell upon this quote from Siz Wang, in the December 2024 edition of the aNYmator ASIFA-East newsletter: "I think the human experience is important because thinking is a social activity. You cannot think alone, so you need to meet people, and New York City is a great place to do that."*

It prompted a discussion of the importance of interactions among members of any discipline, then the shocking revelation that **Bob Swieringa** was probably "going to be late" because *he had been hit by a car*. (Note: he was encouraged to wait until ambulation, not ambulances, were the prominent factor in his life).

**Deanna Morse**, back from a dizzying tour of the Northern Hemisphere, reported on her amazing visit to Portugal's Cinanima-24, with her presentation being preserved on youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Buyqevihe3U>



*With Joanna Quinn and Les Mills*

Deanna also related that there were over 550 films for the Academy™ consideration in the animation category, over half of them features. All were excited on the prospects of theatrical release for the Latvian film *Flow* by Gints Zilbalodis (Deanna later told the coffee that she had seen it at least six times), and were in unanimous accord that Adam Elliott's *Memoir of a Snail* was an amazing experience, but definitely *not* for children!



*With Kim White*

Wallace and Gromit's *Vengeance Most Fowl* from Aardman was also on everyone's short list once it made the streaming services later in December (later note: it is a lot of fun, and the set constructions are amazing!).



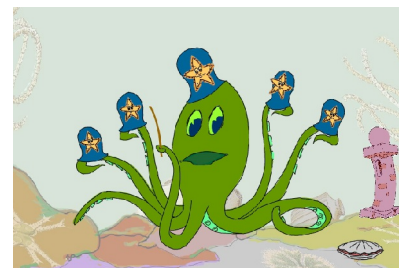
**Benoit Berth Siward** also curates an incredible animation resource - *The Animation Showcase* - that offers a vast series of streaming animation shorts, often running in tandem with international festivals or having Academy™ nominations. It offers a great opportunity for access, especially for those not able to make it to festivals. It does require registration, but once you're in, you get emailed updates on the latest and greatest in their current playlist - <https://watch.animationshowcase.com/>

**Gary Schwartz** wanted us to all be aware that there is a seemingly systemic collapse of art schools across the US, amid all the concerns about jobs and AI, and that even Sheridan College is cutting back on some of its programs. He includes his alma mater, the Philadelphia College of the Arts (PCA) to the list. Evidently, ten schools closed during 2024. Here's the link to the full story: <https://observer.com/2023/09/independent-art-colleges-closing/>

**Jim Middleton** finished *another* project from his misspent youth - well, his 50s, anyway, still often misspent - it was initially a weekend romp involving a lip sync'ed octopus as a policeman, to a portion of the Gilbert and Sullivan song, *When a Felon's Not Engaged in His Employment*. In 2007, he drew the first 20 seconds, then got distracted by stuff. And things. It should have been lost forever, but a \*.fla file popped up on an external hard drive, in mid-back up. So the beast was finally wrapped up in all its 720x480 glory, becoming a true 60 second trifle. Now on vimeo...

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1046164199>

Also, *Au Revoir, Jerome*, directed by Chloe Farr, caught Jim's eye for its surreal atmosphere and dazzling palette - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aKJWZzNeyH8>



*A 60-Second Trifle (2007-2025)*



*Hey, Zoomers!*

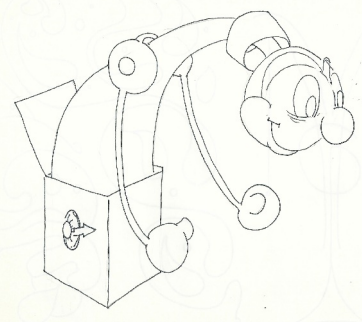
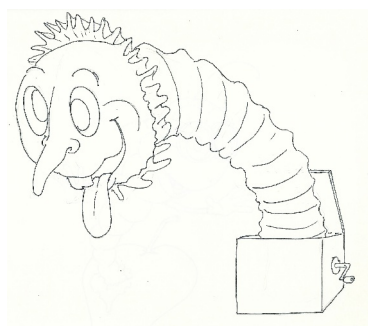
*Michael, Jim, Gretchen, Gary, Deanna, David*

And in keeping with the maxim, "Review your notes as soon as the meeting is over," *yr hmb1 typst* came upon this mysterious quote, scribbled in the margins of the December coffee journal entry: "Somebody took my antiperspirant and now I just smell like perspirant." The beleaguered village of Edmore has yet to offer any source for this bit of wisdom.

A favorite cartoon of the ASIFA Zoomers is the 1928 Fleischer brothers' classic, *Koko's Earth Control*. It entered into the National Film Registry in 2024, and the prints that are available are so clear you can see the "cut and tear" technique in all its delicious splendor!



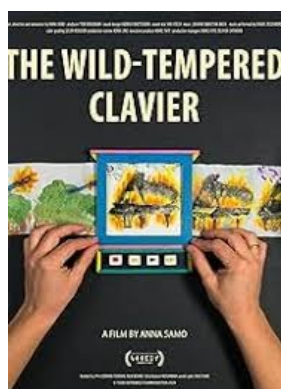
*Au Revoir, Jerome by Chloe Farr*



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLuyN1SOyYQ&t=2s>

*Animation Magazine* has the full story at their link:

<https://www.animationmagazine.net/2024/12/fleischer-toon-kokos-earth-control-added-to-national-film-registry>



And while on the subject of classic animation techniques, the December coffee brought up a new modern classic, *The Wild Tempered Clavier*, where Anna Samo created animation on a continuous roll of toilet paper! Our pandemic-lockdown era workshop made use of a similar technique with our quick access to well-stocked closets filled with Angel Soft and Cottonelle fluffed goodness!

Oh those bittersweet memories...

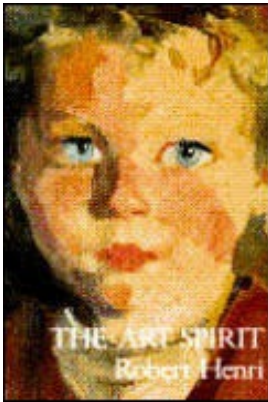




In our January ASIFA coffee, we discovered the full tale of Bob Swieringa's close encounter with moving metal, his vast capacity for survival on the wild walkways of Kent county, his patience with being a patient, and his upcoming storyboard, soon to be a major motion picture, for *How to Get Hit by a Car*. He had to watch a youtube video for proper instruction on crutches. Seek ChatGPT for better words than "fortitude" to describe his recovery. The situation prompted some dialog among the generations in attendance, as the responsible driver was considered elderly:

- "In your country, are you *allowed* to drive a car when you're 70?"
- "Um, yes. And we prefer *sixty-ten* to 70."
- "In Missouri, when you turn 70, you need to get your license renewed every 3 years instead of 6. This includes a vision test and asking you if you can identify different kinds of street signs. Otherwise, you can drive till you drop—probably not the safest practice."
- "If you drop while driving in Michigan after 70, you lose your casino privileges."

Kidding aside, Bob is healing well, and everyone at ASIFA Central is relieved, knowing his recovery is aided by his extraordinarily positive outlook and great sense of humor. We all want to be Bob when we grow up.



When film discussions resumed, it was to note that, for the first time in anyone's memory, the layout designers were given opening "cinematography" credit for the recently released CGI animated feature *Wild Robot*.

Also, artistic statements and educational guidance emerged from a classic source - *The Art Spirit* by Robert Henri. It still rings true after 102 years. And it is still in print!

More technical discussions followed, examining the various makeshift downshooters being used in a world of fewer mechanics and more prestidigitalization. **Chris Sullivan** and **Gary Schwartz** weighed in on Manfrotto tripods, as Deanna had just obtained hers.



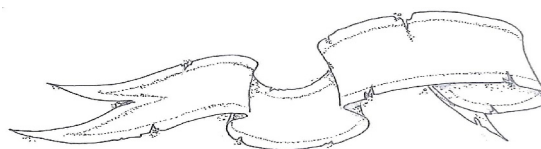
The challenge of outdated technologies created a discussion on earlier versions of Flash from Adobe and the value of SWF files in the 21<sup>st</sup> century - apparently, AfterEffects can still read them (Quicktime used to be a handy alternative, even reading early FLC from the DOS era – shortly after the development of Cuneiform, an early analog system).

Steve Leeper has links to his *Creation* film, an inspirational work-in-progress: <https://jsl-studio-animation.webnode.page/>  
 We also learned that Russian animators are still expressing themselves, albeit with extreme anonymity: <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/politics/russian-animators-creating-anti-war-shorts-protest-putins-attack-213975-213975.html>

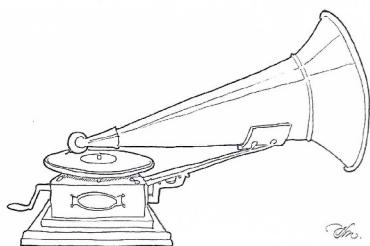


And in the category of peace if no war, or war if no peace, **Michael Long** offered this link to McLaren's *Neighbors*, in case it had been unseen by anyone under the age of sixty-ten - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1q8f-I6YsI>

**David Thrasher** uncovered the trailer for *Hundreds of Beavers* <https://youtu.be/5h4P-26kHAW?si=wZYFsxB-xHJu5NbA> – a supernatural comedy where “a drunken applejack salesman must go from zero to hero and become North America's greatest fur trapper when he loses his whole operation in a fire and is stranded in the wilderness.” Facing starvation, he must survive in a surreal winter populated by *Hundreds of Beavers* played by actors in full-sized beaver costumes. In black and white, with sight gags and stop-motion worthy of Mack Sennett.



## Public Domain Update - SOMETHING Positive About 2025!



“Sorry, Nipper, we’re going Orthophonic!”

For 2025, the magic years of access to the world of public domain are 1925 and 1929. Any recording made at the dawn of electrical phonography (ie 78rpm) in 1925 or earlier, or any film or published work up through 1929 are now in the public domain.

So what, you ask? Well, *Skeleton Dance* is yours, as is *The Cocoanuts* with the Marx Brothers, the first filmed version of *Singin’ in the Rain*, and thousands of other works. 1925 hits a lot of early jazz, and on microphone, not acoustic horns (so bass is bass and not a tuba), and studios were in a rush to re-issue new versions (now 100 years old, but new then!) of classical pieces that would set Carl Stalling to drool.

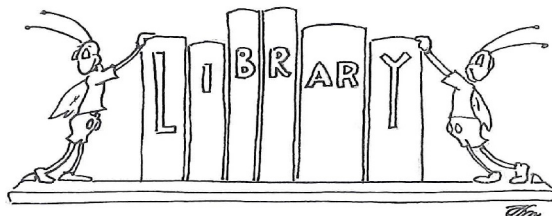
Lots of material to study and learn from, lots of sounds for test tracks and inspiration. See <https://web.law.duke.edu/cspd/publicdomainday/2025/> for more examples, and also check out a new site called Creazilla - <https://creazilla.com/> - for thousands of graphics and music clips (and complete works). All, of course, in addition to the indefatigable gang at <https://archive.org>, yr hmb1 typst’s favorite afternoon time suck (that’s a technical term, of course).

### A Note from Cindy Keefer, of the CVM

“Just a quick note to let all of you know CVM is fine. LA is devastated by wildfires, but our office and vaults are not near the fires or evacuation zones. I am holed up several hours north in wine country, working on my next Fischinger book. We extend our sincere condolences to one board member who was evacuated.

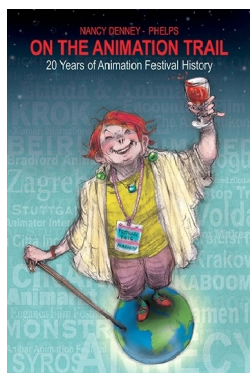
“While we have many colleagues and friends who have evacuated, we’ve not heard of any CVM members who’ve lost homes. Our thoughts are with all who are still in LA.

“Many thanks to those who’ve reached out to check on us. In the near future, we’ll be moving some materials OUT of Los Angeles.”



**Nancy Denney-Phelps Hits The Trail!** <http://awn.com/blogs/sprockets>

info from - <https://www.awn.com/news/animation-journalist-nancy-denney-phelps-releases-animation-trail>



Animation historian and longtime blogger Nancy Denney-Phelps has released her new book, *On the Animation Trail, 20 Years of Animation Festival History*, featuring front and back covers by Joanna Quinn. The new book charts the recent history of animation festivals from the oldest animation festival in the world in Annecy, to the founding of the festival in Peja, Kosovo. During her extensive travels, Nancy has recorded not just the films screened, but also the people and what makes each festival unique. It is shipping now, or at least very soon, and can be ordered directly from Routledge Press, IBAN number ISBN 9781032565682. Nancy has been a thorough source of information for the ASIFA-SF chapter, giving editor Karl Cohen a lot of detailed, behind-the-scenes observations of her exhaustive international journeys. In our discussions, she recommends reading “with a good dark chocolate and delicious Cabernet.” Cheers!





***This late-breaking (15 January, 2025 morning) news from LA via Cindy at CVM.***

“We're sad to share the terrible news that Charles Dockum's Dockum Research Lab in Altadena, CA has burned down in the horrendous LA fires.

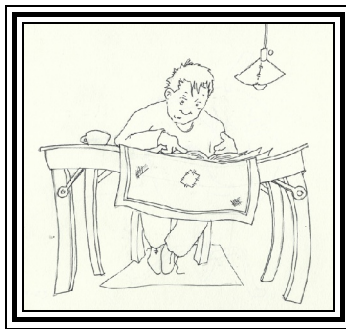
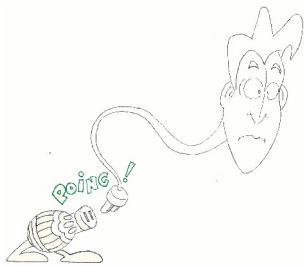
The building contained his archive relating to his Mobilcolor work, and his last Mobilcolor Projector. There are some papers and diagrams at the Guggenheim NY's archive, and some papers, photographs and all of his Mobilcolor films at CVM.

His daughter Greta who lived on the same street lost her house. She is OK.

We'll soon post this news to various social media sites. So very tragic.”

To see what was lost, view the page about Charles Dockum on the CVM website:

<http://www.centerforvisualmusic.org/Dockum>



*ASIFA Central Newsletter (cc) January 2025, 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!** Make sure to check our Instagram: <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> - and be sure to check out the Facebook page - ANIZOOMATION - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/342482260109209/>

#### **ANIMATION UNITES US**

As usual, send any suggestions, comments, or zoetrope camera settings that actually work, along with the usual castigations to yr hmbl typist, at [jim.middletonrx@gmail.com](mailto:jim.middletonrx@gmail.com) or, for his 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. Make that threes.

Psst! Free-Range Board Member **Deanna Morse** (Madame President to All ASIFAnians!) has a new web-site: [deannamorse.com](http://deannamorse.com)

# Analytical and Articulatory Animation Analyses

## Supplement to ASIFA Central Newsletter Series - January 2025

The supplement in this issue features Part Three of Karl Cohen's essay on animated films and the holocaust, along with generous segments from our free-range member Chuck Wilson

There will not be a quiz.

### Part Three of Karl Cohen's Essay on Animation and the Holocaust

**H**olocaust films represent a major evolution of animation as a serious medium for communication and persuasion. Animated, documentary-style productions can further explore other difficult issues confronting the world today, from societal relationships to living on a planet struggling to sustain an inhabitable environment.

While most animation dealing with horrific mass murder refer to Nazi atrocities, there are now at least three powerful animated works that deal with more recent barbaric events.

Ulf Pikkov's *Body Memory* (Estonia, 2011, 9 minutes), is a remarkable, powerful film that isn't about the Germans shipping humans in cattle cars to the slaughter houses. Stalin used the same method to ship his "enemies" in Estonia to work camps (gulags) in Siberia and to other locations. Pikkov's powerful work captures the horrific drama of being in a cattle car headed towards one such gulag. Without using human voices on the soundtrack, Pikkov conveys what the people might have been thinking, with the tensions and mental dramas building until it explodes. (the smell must have been awful as well.)

<https://www.meetyoolee.com/post/body-memory-2011>

When I thanked Nancy Denney-Phelps for introducing this film to me, she said, "If I remember correctly, Ulo told me that he filmed the brief segments of twisted forests on the actual train route that was used to take people from Estonian to the gulags in Siberia. Ulo has a PhD, and this year he and his family are living in the U.S. while he is teaching at the Rhode Island School of Art and Design."

*Voices from Kaw Thoo Lei* by Martha Gorzycki (2015, 11 minutes) is an important, underreported story. Martha's short is an impressive experimental documentary, weaving fragments of interviews together that she recorded with members of the Karen people of former Burma (now Myanmar). It is a powerful and disturbing film that hints at what they have experienced, including ordeals they witnessed, and events that were inflicted on them, before they fled their country.

The film is an experience where the animated visuals create

a somber mood rather than depicts actions described in the soundtrack. It becomes a meditation where you have the opportunity to concentrate on the message. It has won awards at over 20 film festivals for its excellence.

<https://vimeo.com/marthagorzycki>

I asked Martha Gorzycki, head of the animation program at San Francisco State University, why she decided to make this remarkable film about the plight of the Karen people. She is not of Asian descent, nor has she ever been to Myanmar yet she spent several years developing this work of art.

She said she first heard about the Karen people several years ago from an animator whose wife is Karen. Despite the horrific story of their plight, she was told that nobody was listening to their tragic story or their pleas for help. Months later she met other Karen refugees in Minnesota (where a relative was helping them to adjust to living in America). She heard similar sentiments repeated – that nobody is listening to them or was willing to provide the much-needed humanitarian assistance.

The Karen migrated to Burma over two thousand years ago, but other groups who arrived earlier had different religious and cultural beliefs. Each claimed parts of the country as their land, so the conflict between groups has lasted for centuries.

Their present troubles arose when Burma became an independent nation in 1948. The new government wanted to unify the nation. That resulted in a civil war with the government's military slaughtering civilians, an ethnic cleansing that has been going on and off since 1948.

Martha responded by recording interviews about the brutal experiences they were subjected to by Myanmar government soldiers. The hatred is based on generations of ugly prejudices, a hatred among different ethnic-based groups, and a complex mixture of religious, political and social beliefs.

The Karen people Martha interviewed had once lived in the original eastern Burma, near the border of Thailand. They are a different cultural group than the better known Rohingya, who lived to the west. Most of the Rohingya fled in the second decade of this century to fields in Bangladesh

when the army burnt down their villages.

Unfortunately, the fields where they settled in flood each monsoon season, destroying property and drowning the inhabitants. Both the Karen and Rohingya have experienced the horror of terrorist experiences that have led to the genocide of both groups. The perpetrator was and still is the Myanmar military government.

Martha's final step was to edit together the soundtrack and to illustrate it without using images that would distract from the spoken words. The end result is an impressive cry for help that calls attention to their tragic humanitarian crisis that remains unresolved. The visuals are abstract compositions of materials she collected and filmed on a traditional animation stand. They help us imagine portray the dangerous, dark forests and jungles where these concealed people try to survive.

*Waltz with Bashir*, Ari Folman (2008, Israel, 90 minutes), involves a former Israeli soldier trying to recall his repressed memories of his experiences during the 1982 war with Lebanon, while trying to understand his part in the Sabra and Shatila massacre. The purge that took place in refugee camps, and the soldier's unit sent flares into the night sky to help the Israeli-allied Lebanese Christian Phalange militia carry out their horrible mission. The resulting massacre of between 762 and 3,500 civilians (the number is disputed) was an act of retaliation for the assassination of Bachir Gemayel, a popular general who had just been elected president of Lebanon.

While the Jewish soldiers did not know what the right-wing Christian Phalangists militia were doing until after the atrocity, he concludes that the gaps in his memory were a mental defense mechanism. As he tries to reconstruct his memory, he begins to question the degree for which he was responsible in the massacre, even indirectly. While the massacre is scarcely remembered, it was, too briefly, a major international news story.

Much of Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* depicts war as hell. It is an auto-biographical experience to show that once he and other soldiers entered the war zone, their stress level is was elevated 24/7 by their fears of being killed. Tension is sensed from little things happening, including soldiers being trigger happy, shooting at unseen noises or movements caused by a gust of wind. As tension builds up, irrational behavior becomes more pronounced. The audience may begins to realize that Folman is showing us signs of serious mental issues developing.

When I interviewed Folman a few days before the film was shown in San Francisco, I asked what he hoped to achieve by making the film. He replied that his target audience was

Israeli youths of draft age and that he wanted to dispel the beliefs that the media often gives us - of the glory of being a soldier. By showing them a war-zone as nerve-wracking experience for a person on the ground, they might have second thoughts about being drafted. He was disappointed that box office reports indicated that the film's actual audience was an older, more mature audience.

*Waltz with Bashir* grossed over \$11 million worldwide, an impressive amount for an animated documentary. It was the first animated feature to be nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. It won several top awards at major international festivals (Zagreb, France's César, and several others). It was also banned from being screened in Lebanon and in several other Middle Eastern (Arab) nations.

#### *Final comments*

People generally think that animation is a light form of entertainment, but these films serve a noble purpose including exposing the lies, misinformation and other honorable things that prejudices create. People need to understand what institutionalized hatred has been doing to our world for centuries. Fortunately, animation can confront and expose the negative effects of racism, nationalism, religious indoctrination and other systems that divide people into stereotyped groups and depict some who are different as inferior.

The animated Holocaust film is part of a growing body of animated documentaries hoping to influence society in some way. This use of the medium to influence us dates back to Winsor McCay's *Sinking of the Lusitania* in 1918, which depicted the enormous loss of life caused by a torpedo that was fired from a German submarine, intentionally in the format of another cinematic innovation of the time - the newsreel. The film was propaganda during "The Great War" more than casually hinting that the audience should detest the perpetrator - the German Kaiser. Since then, animators have created works supporting or disapproving of other wars, capital punishment, various forms of bigotry and dozens of other challenging topics.

Researching animated Holocaust films reminds us all that not only did six million Jews die in Hitler's concentration camps, but that the Fascists exterminated others for trumped up reasons (including being mentally impaired, homosexuals, gypsies, or some perceived inferiority offensive to members of "the master race"). I had assumed the number of non-Jews that Hitler had killed in his gas chambers was significant, but in the thousands. I was stunned to discover over a half-million non-Jewish civilians were slaughtered at his camps (jewishvirtuallibrary.org has further stunning statistics).



Nazi Germany is the easiest monster to clearly represent the embodiment of Evil. There have been other mass murderers of civilians. Stalin was as ruthless as Hitler (estimates that he murdered about five million people in his gulags, and another 5 to 9 million from famine in the 1930s by his mismanagement of agricultural production). But Stalin was our brief ally during WWII, so Tashlin's *Russian Rhapsody* in 1944 was hardly an indictment of his internal purges.

We live at a time when right wing rhetoric has been on the rise and military activities continue to disrupt the lives of millions of people across the globe. The traditional ways of dealing with hatred and war have to change if civilization is going to survive in a world full of weapons so powerful and efficient. The current destruction of Gaza is a sample of what war is capable of doing to civilization.

I grew up admiring Martin Luther King Jr. and I was lucky enough to attend two of his speeches. He tried to teach us to do something that seems to be much harder to do, to turn the other cheek, to love our enemy and to build a better world together. We need to put aside our prejudices and to work harder as a nation. We must take seriously the problems raised with global warming, our polluting the land and seas, public health issues, the rights of women, minorities, and LGBTQ and other important issues. We need persuasive works to call attention to them and hopefully to present positive ideas on how to improve the world.

Why not give peace a chance? We can work that way through animation, or we can live the lesson created in 1939 by Hugh Harman at MGM - his *Peace on Earth* remains powerful and prescient, enlightening as it is sobering. Animation can bring hope - you might consider the advice of Bill Plympton: make it short, make it inexpensive, and make it funny. Or you can make it a labor of love, as Frederic Back's beatific vision in *The Man Who Planted Trees*.

Animation can be effective. Creative people, joining forces with non-profits, can develop films that address serious issues and pitch them to groups that might be in a position to help. Another route is to create personal shorts about issues that you feel are important. It really is possible for you to do your part to help save the planet, one laugh, one smile, one hope at a time.

This study is far from complete. If you have favorite films or materials that should be considered please send information to [karlcohen@earthlink.net](mailto:karlcohen@earthlink.net).

### Acknowledgements

Tsvika Oren who lives in Tel Aviv, Israel contributed very useful information to this study. He is an animation scholar who teaches in Israel, and he has published an animation magazine since 2006.

Martha Gorzycki heads the animation program at San Francisco State University, is an advocate of animated documentaries, and has worked on the animated feature *Popol Vuh: The Creation Myth of the Maya*, 1990, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Nancy Denney-Phelps lives in Gent, Belgium and is an animation historian and journalist. She is a regular contributor to the ASIFA-SF newsletter I write and edit. She mainly covers the international world of animation.

Piotr Kardas from Poland is the author of *Great Animation Short Documentaries of 2023*, an informative illustrated article. He is director of O!PLA, Rising the Lusitania Animadoc Festival, and Craft Animation Festival. An interview with him is posted at Video: Piotr Kardas Interview ([zippyframes.com](http://zippyframes.com))

Jim Middleton whom I consult with weekly. He keeps me on my toes as he contributes by refining what I'm thinking and writing about.

*Holocaust Representations in Animated Documentaries: The Contours of Commemoration* by Liat Steir-Livny, Edinburgh University Press, 264 pages, Hardback \$110.00, and as an eBook. It examines representations of the holocaust, holocaust survivors and their descendants in animated documentaries. One promotion for the book says vast majority of animated holocaust documentaries minimize the horrors and instead focus on bravery, resilience, and hope. Knowledge that the book exists introduced me to the topic of animated Holocaust film.

*Finding Your Roots* on PBS, with historian Henry Lewis Gates Jr. as the host, also influenced this study. Guests on the show learn well researched facts about their family's history. That information sometimes includes facts about relatives who disappeared in the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide and in other horrible moments in history.



## Animated Thoughts with Chuck Wilson

“Art Comes in Many Forms - Part Six”

(see his blog at <https://smudgeanimation.blogspot.com> - this essay is his introduction to MMXXV)



I had hoped to end the old year and begin the new with some art and peaceful introspection. The Flint Institute of Arts did not disappoint.



Now I'll cop to it, looking at the main art museums in the Mid-Michigan corridor (Grand Rapids/East Lansing/Flint/Detroit), I vastly favor the Detroit Institute of Arts. But the smaller art museums here in Michigan have their charms. The Frederik Meijer Gardens has their yearly butterfly and orchid events as well as a wonderful outdoor Japanese garden. I haven't yet been to the Grand Rapids Art Museum, though I do hope to change that oversight later this year. The Broad Art Museum is a quick five minute drive from my home with a basement area housing older works of art and a video installation--and it's a quick walk from the MSU Library, good for research. Detroit has the DIA as well as the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village--all three had been invaluable resources when I was writing my animation history class.

But the Flint Institute of Arts has some really appealing qualities, not the least of which is a 45 minute drive from my home (as opposed to the hour/hour-and-a-half to the DIA, depending on traffic). They've also got a well-stocked library with comfortable chairs and a sofa for reading.

The decision of where I would spend my day was resolved almost immediately when I checked the FIA's website and discovered that they had a painting on display by my favorite artist: Claude Monet. Turns out, "The Sheltered Path" was on their visiting artwork list and would be on display until February.

As I stared at Monet's painting, I was struck by the impermanence of digital. There I sat, looking at a painting from 1873. The colors may not be as vibrant as when it was

first painted, but still a beautiful work of art that, if properly handled, would still be there long after I am but a memory.



*"The Sheltered Path", 1873  
Claude Monet*

Over the past thirty years, I've witnessed countless works of art brought to life through computer software. I've been there during software releases and upgrades, and yes, witnessed software once touted as the 'latest and greatest' denoted as reaching their 'end-of-life' before being relegated to the dustbin of digital history.

3d CGI, polygonal modelling, NURBS, metaballs, texture mapping, bump mapping, non-linear video editing, Corel Draw, Paint Shop Pro, Photoshop, Painter, Kai's Power Tools, Director, After Effects, Future Splash/Flash, Moho, Bernoulli drives, iOmega Zip Drives. I was there for much it. Oftentimes on the sidelines, sometimes in the trenches.

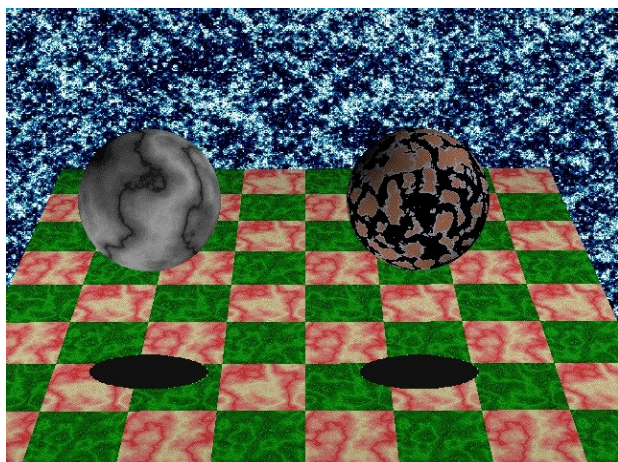
The march of technology is relentless. It's partially why I maintain a number of old computers with obsolete operating systems that are still capable of running some of this older software--so I can still access old copies of animations and imagery that I produced during my college and grad school days.

The computer has brought us works of art that were hitherto undreamt of. I doubt that even the old masters could have conceived of what is being produced by contemporary digital artists. I have to wonder, how constrained were their imaginations by the technology of their time? Thought for another day.

Back when I was in grad school at R.I.T., I had been playing with a freeware 3d rendering and animation software package called POV-Ray. It was a text based

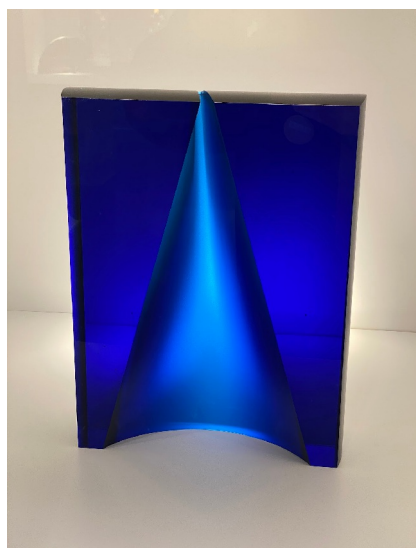


system where you'd plot everything out on graph paper using the Mark I pencil, then create a text file containing all the objects, their coordinates, and their properties for your scene. I was big on stone textures back then, so spent a fair amount of time making marbles using the various texture settings. This would serve me well when I needed objects to animate in my basic animation classes--like learning the squash and stretch principle by animating bouncing balls using Macromedia Director.



Squash and Stretch Assignment - RIT

Since then, I have tinkered with lots of 3d modelling and animation packages like Alias Wavefront/Maya, Ray Dream Studio/Carrara, and Blender. But while useful and entertaining, none of those programs produce anything of permanence. I do still like to walk through museums and look at sculptures--mostly those of stone and glass--and think about how I would recreate them using 3d CGI software. It's a fun thought exercise and it adds an extra dimension to museum visits that makes them more enjoyable for me.



*Hadros*  
2006  
Petr Hora

Sculpture, paintings, celluloid film, animation cels, photographs from the early 1900's, even the hand-drawn paper cels from my MFA thesis, they will all outlive me. My thesis film is digital. Unless I do a transfer to celluloid film stock, one day, it will likely be gone with only the hand drawn cels and a couple printed images in my thesis paper as evidence that it ever existed. If care has been taken to preserve them, one hundred years later, we can still watch films from the 1920's. One-hundred and fifty-two years later, I can still spend an afternoon looking at one of Claude Monet's paintings hanging there on the wall. Over five hundred years later, we can still travel to Florence and appreciate Michelangelo's marble sculpture "David".



Still Life with Fruit", 1855  
Severin Roesen

I have to wonder, five-hundred years from now, will people even know about all the art we created in the late 20th/early 21st Century? Or will there be this huge cultural gap where art was being produced in physical format up until the 1980's and then it largely ceased. What will the museums of 2525 say about us? Will they even remember that we existed or will we just be a footnote in history, this big black hole of nothing called 'the digital age' where very few items of cultural significance survived to be appreciated by future generations?



Chuck Wilson is a forensic animator and master of all Dungeons and Dragons in the greater East Lansing, Michigan area. His computer collection is the envy of anyone who understands the importance of data backup, even if it means a zip-drive.

