SUMMER 2023 — ISSUE NO. 22

KEYFRAME

THE ANIMATION GUILD QUARTERLY

Creating Worlds of 2D Animation

- Drawing Engine & tools for any animated project style, from clean and precise solid vector lines to organic textured bitmap lines
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CREATIVE OUTLETS

THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY IS IN THE BIGGEST DOWNTURN I'VE SEEN SINCE THE EARLY 2000S. WITH THE STREAMING BUBBLE BURSTING, VARIOUS STUDIO LAYOFFS, AND NOW THE VERY NECESSARY WRITERS GUILD STRIKE, MANY OF OUR MEMBERS HAVE UNFORTUNATELY FOUND THEMSELVES UNEMPLOYED OR UNDEREMPLOYED. THIS HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING TIME FOR ALL OF US, BUT I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT CREATIVITY DOES NOT DISAPPEAR JUST BECAUSE EMPLOYMENT DOES.

As artists, we are uniquely equipped to find inspiration and creative expression in even the most difficult of circumstances. Unemployment can be a source of stress and uncertainty, but it can also be an opportunity to explore new avenues of creativity and push ourselves to try new things.

One way to stay creative during unemployment is to focus on personal projects. Perhaps there is a medium or subject matter you've always wanted to explore but haven't had the time for. This could be a great opportunity to dive in and see where it takes you. Personal projects can also be a way to stay connected to your craft and continue developing your skills while you search for employment.

Another way to stay creative is to collaborate with others. This may seem counterintuitive when you're unemployed, but there are likely many other artists in similar situations who would love to work on a project with you. Collaborations can be a great way to expand your creative network, share ideas, and learn from others.

Lastly, it's important to remember that creativity isn't limited to traditional artistic mediums. There are many ways to be creative in your day-to-day life, whether it's cooking, gardening, or even rearranging your furniture. Don't be afraid to think outside the box and try new things.

Unemployment can be a difficult and stressful experience, so it's okay to take time to rest and take care of yourself. But I hope these suggestions can help you stay connected to your creativity and find some joy in the midst of a challenging time.

As a union, we are here to support our members in any way we can. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us for resources, support, or just to connect with other members who may be going through similar experiences. Together, we can weather this storm and emerge even stronger on the other side.

In Solidarity,
Jeanette Moreno King | President
The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839

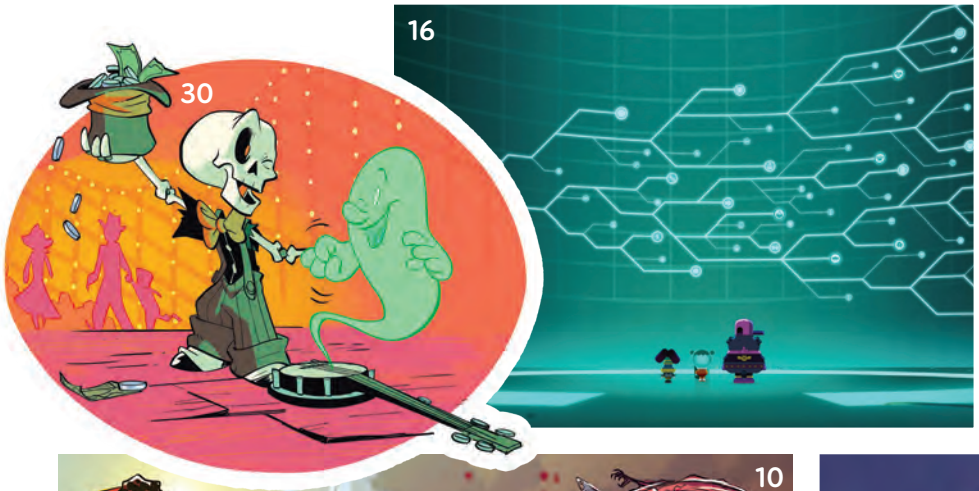
ON THE COVER

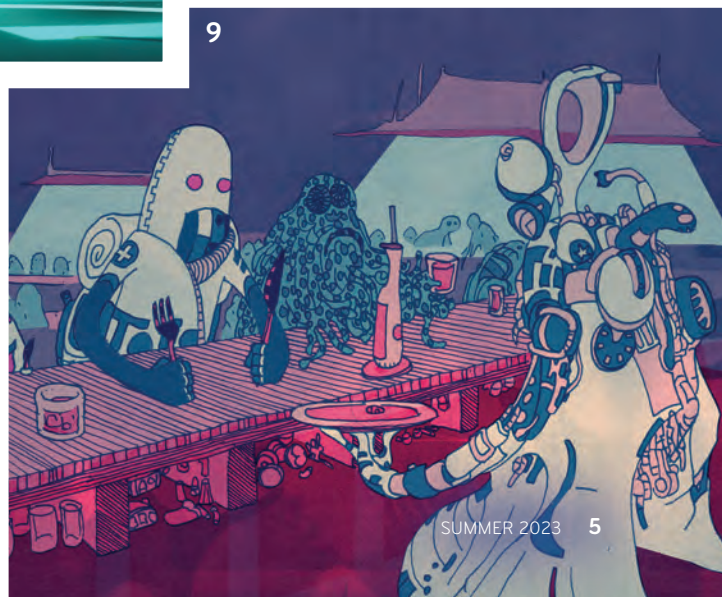
Character Designer Kris Anka created this special artwork to show how he used layers to compose the costume for Spider-Man 2099 in *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*.

CONTENTS

FRAME X FRAME

FEATURES





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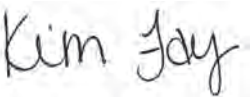
BEHIND THE CURTAIN

WORKING FOR *KEYFRAME* IS LIKE BEING GIVEN VIP ACCESS TO PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAIN. WHILE OZ MAY HAVE TURNED OUT TO BE A DISAPPOINTMENT TO DOROTHY, EVERY TIME I PULL BACK THE ANIMATION CURTAIN, I DISCOVER GREAT AND POWERFUL BEINGS—OTHERWISE KNOWN AS TAG MEMBERS. THE PEOPLE I MEET NOT ONLY MAKE MAGIC, BUT THEY ALSO EMBODY THE MAGIC THEY CREATE.

I've now celebrated my two-year anniversary as Managing Editor of *Keyframe*, and during that time I've had the privilege of learning the beautiful sorcery behind numerous animation crafts and techniques, including choreography, lighting, and this month, character design (**p.22**). I had no idea that a single character can require months of experimentation and refinement as Character Designers work a fine balance between artistry, physical movement, and technology—all while juggling feedback along the way.

I've also discovered that every single movie and TV show has its own challenges. For the creators of the series *Hailey's On It!*, the writers' room had to be reconceived to accommodate the pandemic (**p.18**), and for the series *We Lost Our Human* (**p.16**), an interactive component meant playing a chess game with plot choices that can result in 87,178,291,200 permutations—yes, you read that right! On the big screen, the creative crew on *Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken* faced the complex job of integrating FX with the story and action (**p.36**).

What also blows me away is how creative our members are off the job. They write and illustrate picture books and graphic novels (**p.30**), for example, and they contribute their vision to socially conscious publications (**p.10**). I can't wait to see what upcoming issues of *Keyframe* reveal as we pull back the curtain—again and again—to showcase the artistry of our great and powerfully talented Local 839 team.



Kim Fay
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EVAN HENERSON ("Raising the Bar") is a lifestyle and entertainment writer based in Los Angeles. His work has appeared in *L.A. Parent*, *TV Guide*, *Orange Coast Magazine*, and the *Los Angeles Daily News* where he was a features writer and critic for nine years.

Freelance writer and author **KAREN BRINER** ("Building Dreams" and "How to Get a Book Deal,") grew up in Cape Town, South Africa where her garden was home to wild chameleons. Her most recent novel is *Snowize & Snitch: Highly Effective Defective Detectives.*

After spending more than 50 years in the animation industry, **DAVID BRAIN** has a lot of stories to share. In "Live and Learn," he reminisces about getting to know animation legend Friz Freleng over the decades.


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CREATIVE SPARKS

A few years back, Max Graenitz was feeling artistic burnout. Originally from the Bavarian Alps and now living in L.A., he'd been working in traditional 2D animation for studios like DreamWorks, Disney, and Warner Bros. for years. "Drawing all day long as a job made me lose the fun of drawing for myself," he says. He needed to find his way back to the original spark that made him want to do art in the first place.

The result is *Winslow & Hastings*, one of a series of prints about a pair of specialized repair/servicemen working mundane jobs and facing various predicaments in a futuristic world. Each print has a story, and in this one, Graenitz describes a desert wind blowing at night, the kind that will "curl your hair and make your nerves jump and your skin itch. Anything can happen."

While Graenitz is working on weaving each story into a bigger project, he draws without a specific plan. The line art is done with an ink pen, and he plays around in Photoshop to experiment with color. Then he has to mix the paint, testing combinations to get the many varying shades in a two-color print. Finally, for the Risograph printer, each color needs to be translated into a black and white image.

Graenitz describes the printer as essentially a copy machine where a different drum is used to print each color. "I love working with it since it has a limited color range and isn't very exact, which demands a lot of experimentation," he says. "Rather than just reproducing a digital image, there is still a creative process as you print."

You can find more of Graenitz's work at **maxgraenitz.com**.

ARTIST: Max Graenitz
TITLE: *Winslow & Hastings*
MEDIUM: Pen and Ink, Photoshop, and Risograph
SIZE: 11" x 17"

ART MATTERS

TAG MEMBERS SHARE HOW ART CAN ILLUMINATE THE PAST, EXPLAIN THE PRESENT, AND INSPIRE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

Moved by the murder of George Floyd, police brutality, and other tragic events of 2020, animation executives Dawn Yamazi and Deb Stone began percolating the idea of a book that would lay bare the inequities they were witnessing and offer hope for positive change.

They formed a small advisory board to explore initial ideas. Two TAG members—Storyboard Artist Jerry Gaylord and Story Artist and Character Designer Bryan Turner—were among the first people involved in a brainstorming process that would evolve into *Art of Change in Support of Black Lives*, a coffee table book that tackles hard historical moments, imagines an inclusive future, and celebrates Black triumphs and joy—all with the goal of inspiring dialogue and action.

More artists joined the project, and over the course of many discussions, it was decided that Past, Present, and Future would provide the framework for art and stories. Each artist was given a mostly random selection of five words related to a given time period. Small groups were then created, and they met in Zoom meetings, researching and finding the stories they wanted to tell through individual works of art.

"Everyone was free to interpret [their theme] however they wanted to," Gaylord says. "We didn't want to control what people created." At the same time, each breakout group had a guide to ensure sensitivity to the subject matter. This process required truthful discussions, and so before the book was even published, it was sparking the kinds of conversations Stone and Yamazi had hoped for.

Gaylord especially appreciated that "everyone's experience with these issues and themes is different depending on who you are. We don't experience it the same way, and we wanted to be able to have all of [these varied experiences] present and accounted for."

More than 100 contributors to *Art of Change* included numerous TAG members. Story Artist AnChi Shen was born and raised mostly in Taiwan. "When everything happened in 2020, it was a huge shock because I don't know the past of this land that well," she says. While she was in her breakout group she was also in her first job out of university. As she looked around her workplace, "it was pretty obvious, the difference in diversity," she says.

"Speaking to AnChi, maybe she hasn't experienced the same things Jerry or I have," says Turner, "but she can reflect and say, you know what, I'm at work and I'm noticing things. Maybe I can speak to that."

For her illustration, Shen came up with the idea of the proverbial glass ceiling as a glass box. Inside the box people are mostly white. Outside are people of color. But if you break the glass box, then everyone is in the same place and "everyone can feel empowered," she says.

While Shen reflected on what she was witnessing, for Gaylord "it was really about processing what I was feeling at the moment," he says. "For me it was all very personal." While listening to public discourse, he kept hearing people say that the police aren't bad, it's just a bad apple here and there. "I don't think those people remember what the actual saying is," he says. "One bad apple spoils the bunch—not ignore the bad apple." Gaylord chose to depict a Black boy horrified to discover that the apple he's holding is rotten with monster police.

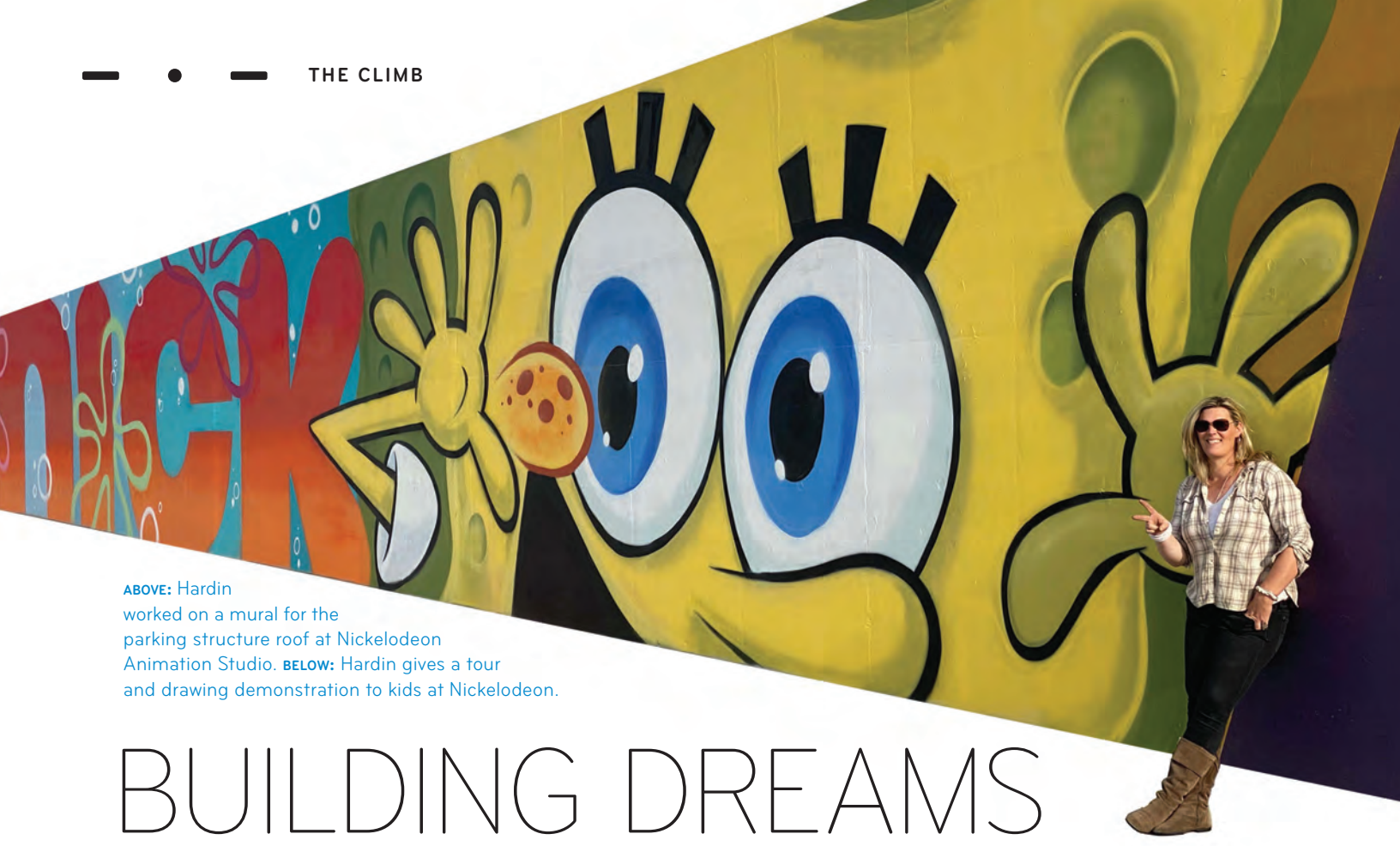
Turner took another path, interested in how differently people were reacting to what was happening in the country. "A lot of it was negative rather than focusing on what we can actually do to strive to make things better," he says. His thoughts turned to Congressman John Lewis who experienced the struggle for voting and civil rights in the 1960s and the struggle against police brutality in the 2020s. "I can only imagine how he was feeling," Turner says, "wanting to hold their hands and say, hey, listen, calm yourself young person, this is what we need to do in a civil, intelligent way so people can become educated." The result is a portrayal of a young John Lewis holding hands with an old John Lewis, bridging the eras of Emmett Till and George Floyd.

Each artist in the book has their own distinct style, but for Visual Development Artist Pamela Hoogeboom, a very specific style was essential to making a point. "I wanted to do something that on appearance seemed fun and friendly," she says, "and when you get into the actual content you start to see the injustices, the horrors, the things that aren't fitting into that Golden Book style from when you first looked at it." She focused on Route 66 and the "sundown towns" where Black people were not allowed after sundown. "You're drawn in by how colorful and cute and sweet this [seems to be], and as you go through it you get some pretty horrific facts. Hopefully that shocks you a bit," she says.

A call to action, *Art of Change* creators and artists hope the book will inspire people to talk about race and inequity in America "rather than just banging heads," says Turner. "It should be a natural discussion, [and] I think this book lends the opportunity for that."

You can order a copy of *Art of Change* at www.OneWorldWe.com.

(FROM TOP) *One Bad Apple* ©Jerry Gaylord; *Let's Start the Conversation* ©AnChi Shen; *A Bridge to Change* ©Bryan Turner; *Sundown Towns* ©Pamela Hoogeboom



ABOVE: Hardin worked on a mural for the parking structure roof at Nickelodeon Animation Studio. **BELOW:** Hardin gives a tour and drawing demonstration to kids at Nickelodeon.

BUILDING DREAMS

MODEL DESIGNER AMBER HARDIN HAS BUILT A CAREER BY BLENDING STRUCTURAL THINKING, IMAGINATION, AND ART.

Being sent to her room as a kid was not exactly a punishment for Amber Hardin. "Because what was in my room? An entire world that was going on in my head," she says. In her room she had two choices: Legos or drawing. The Model Designer, whose career in the animation industry has spanned more than 25 years, was not one to follow the instructions on the Lego box and instead came up with her own fantastical creations. As for drawing, hours would fly by as she lost herself in the world of her imagination.

Hardin recalls her entire family watching Saturday morning cartoons in the 1970s—shows like *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle and Friends*. Then a new wave of animation hit that really grabbed her attention: shows like *Transformers*, *Masters of the Universe*, and *Voltron*. Enthralled, she began redrawing what she saw on TV. Her parents noticed her sketches–skulls, guns, and robots. Her mom struck a deal with her. Whenever she drew one of those images, she'd also have to draw one of her mother's requests. This included landscapes and tractors, which helped her to expand her range.

By the time Hardin was 11, she became fascinated with graffiti art. This led to an apprenticeship with street art pioneer Jeff "Doze" Green. She studied his technique and worked on several projects with him, an experience she calls both a master's in art and a master's in philosophy because of his belief that art is influenced by a person's perception of the world. When Hardin was only 19, she was invited to work with the art department at Roger Corman's studio in Venice Beach. She recalls being asked to draw a futuristic submarine-secret underground base-space station. She sketched on the spot, and the response was, "Great, let's build it!" Hardin was surprised to be asked for her artwork's dimensions, and amazed that her drawings were going to be built. This was a huge step for her development as a Model Designer. She learned technical drawing from the builders, who showed her how to turn her vision into a real-life, practical set.

From Corman's studios Hardin moved to New Line Cinema, and then she serendipitously bumped into a high school friend who worked at Hanna-Barbera. This led to

her first job in animation, as a Storyboard Revisionist, in 1996—a leap she says was enabled by having an adaptable skill set, solid draftsmanship, a willingness to learn, and a little luck. Her next job would be as a Prop and Effects Artist at DreamWorks SKG when they were just starting their animation department. "I sort of went from zero to 80, just kind of got thrown in," she says.

When she started at DreamWorks, people advised her to always play to her strengths. She watched what her colleagues were doing with characters, backgrounds, and story and asked them to explain why they were making certain choices with their drawings. "I applied those principles to what I was doing at the time. And it made me excel at that," she says. She discovered that her strength was in designing things that don't have their own consciousness—trees, architecture, machines, robots, or structural pieces.

This brings her back to playing with Legos and drawing in her childhood bedroom. Hardin notes that Legos have a three-dimensional structural element to them, and when you combine that with drawing, those skills are very close to what she does today as a designer. She feels she may also have been influenced by her adoptive father, an aerospace engineer who was constantly designing creations at home, once even building a robot in the garage. Later, when she met her birth father, she discovered that he was a general contractor, which, she points out, also requires structural thinking. All these factors, as well as the amount of time and effort she's devoted to her craft, have helped her to excel at mechanical caricature. Still, drawing remains a joy for Hardin. "When I draw, I lose track of time...it's almost like a meditation or a prayer," she says. She feels that if she puts good energy into her work, people on the other end of the TV screen will feel that energy, and it may brighten a kid's day.

Although Hardin is mostly self-taught, after making the shift from live action to animation, she took a few formal courses in traditional animation at the Academy of Art University satellite in Van Nuys and in concept art, visual communication, and digital painting at Concept Design Academy in Pasadena. But she cannot emphasize enough the extent to which peer-to-peer learning has influenced her journey. Every production she's worked on has been an opportunity to learn from those around her—productions that include *Santiago of the Seas*, *Casagrandes*, *Shimmer and Shine*, *The Fairly OddParents*, *Catscratch*, *Johnny Bravo*, and many others. "I've been very, very fortunate to work with some incredibly talented people," she says, and she views every new job as a learning experience, which is further strengthened by how she branches out, from helping a friend with a custom house remodel to working quietly with a close group of animation colleagues on a creator-based start-up.

Hardin's trajectory in animation has been a steady progression, and she's stayed pretty much in her lane. This can be a double-edged sword, because she feels she has much more to offer. In the next phase of her career, she would love the opportunity to explore her full range of creativity. "The high points in my career are when I'm given the chance to do more and get out of my lane and sort of swerve about recklessly," she says, adding that she is filled with gratitude for her long career: "Being able to do what you want for a living and being able to forget what time it is because you're having so much fun ... Not everybody gets to do that, and you can't really put a price on that."

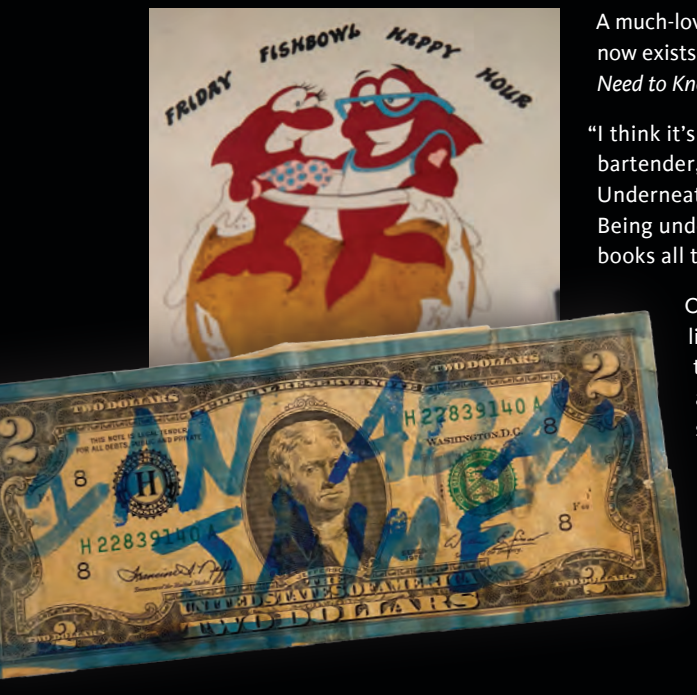
Learn more about Hardin at **amberhardindesignportfolio.carbonmade.com**.

– Karin Briner

FROM TOP CLOCKWISE: Hardin at work at Nickelodeon; *We Are Inclusion* mural at Luther Burbank Middle School; Hardin has worked on numerous murals as part of Nickelodeon Community Efforts; Hardin's diverse style can be seen in her painting, *Goddess of the Hunt*.

RAISING THE BAR

OWNING A BAR IN COLLEGE LED WRITER ADAM LORENZO TO CAPTURE LIFE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THOSE UNDERGRAD DAYS.



A much-loved bar that served the students of Syracuse University in New York, Maggie's now exists only in photographs and memories—and in writer Adam Lorenzo's book, *All I Need to Know I Learned from My College Bar*.

"I think it's a dorm now," says Lorenzo who spent many a night at Maggie's as patron, bartender, and eventually owner while he was an undergrad. "They flattened it. Underneath us was a Follett bookstore, the largest college bookstore chain in America. Being underneath a bar was the worst place for a college bookstore. At a bar, you ruin books all the time."

One memory leads to another, and Lorenzo–a TV and film writer who works in both live action and animation–recalls that Maggie's held weekly turtle races during which the turtles would have a bottlecap attached to the backs of their shells and "race" around a customized track. On the following morning, bookstore employees would show up at Maggie's with a shoebox full of the slow-footed winners and also-rans. "Drunk people lose their turtles," explains Lorenzo with a laugh.

Turtle racing is just one of the situations captured in Lorenzo's book. Featuring illustrations by Antonio Giovanni Pinna and published by Fayetteville Mafia Press, it is his first foray into publishing. Not only did he have a blast assembling it, but he also took great pleasure using the project to revisit his pre-entertainment industry life.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Maggie's bar **(TOP)** and memorabilia from the bar **(BOTTOM)**. **THIS PAGE FROM TOP LEFT:** Lorenzo with his grandparents George and Marie Lorenzo on graduation day; Maggie's bar; the cover of Lorenzo's book.

Lorenzo was a kid from Buffalo attending Syracuse, and like many undergrads not yet certain where his life would lead him. Hustling his way through college, he worked as a bartender and therefore spent lots of time at Maggie's. Upon learning that one of the owners was retiring, Lorenzo put down a small amount of money to take over ownership, signing a promissory note both to meet his financial obligation and pledging not to screw things up. Once he took over, "I would be there until 3 a.m. jumping on the garbage in the dumpster so the lid would close," he says. "Everywhere else [people are] asleep at 11 p.m. on a Monday night, but in a college bar, you can't move. You can't get in. It was a zoo."

This zoo invited human connections. When he wasn't tramping down garbage or sacking out on the pool table, Lorenzo was gaining valuable wisdom that he dispenses, one bit at a time, in his book, offering venue-specific advice such as "Get the fries" and "Participate in a turtle race," as well as more generalized life lessons: "Choose your friends wisely" and "Breathe. It calms the nervous system."

"It's a place where people think about what they're going to do for the rest of their lives, like I did," he says. "And as a bartender, you hear everything."

He points to sage words once offered to him by an unhoused person: "You can never do wrong by doing right." This maxim appears in the book, which he set up as a journey from when a student enters college through to graduation. "What were the things that really helped me? What did I see? What did I learn?" he says.

Lorenzo knew from early on that his future did not lie in bar-owning. He began selling jokes to David Letterman's production company and was invited to join the staff of *The Late Late Show with Craig Kilborn*. The move took him to Los Angeles and out of the bar business in 1999.

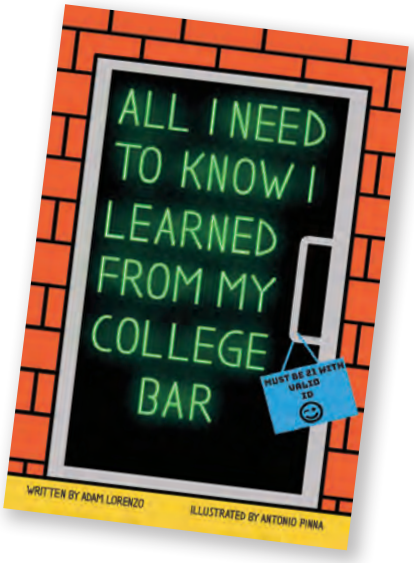
He went on to write for such series as *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *Everybody Hates Chris*, and he joined TAG when he began developing the animated series *Oswald the Lucky Rabbit* for Disney. He is also working on several other TV and film projects including an animated environmental comedy movie with Producer Paul Green. His future plans include turning *All I Need to Know* into a comic strip with illustrations by regular *The New Yorker* contributor Brooke Bourgeois.

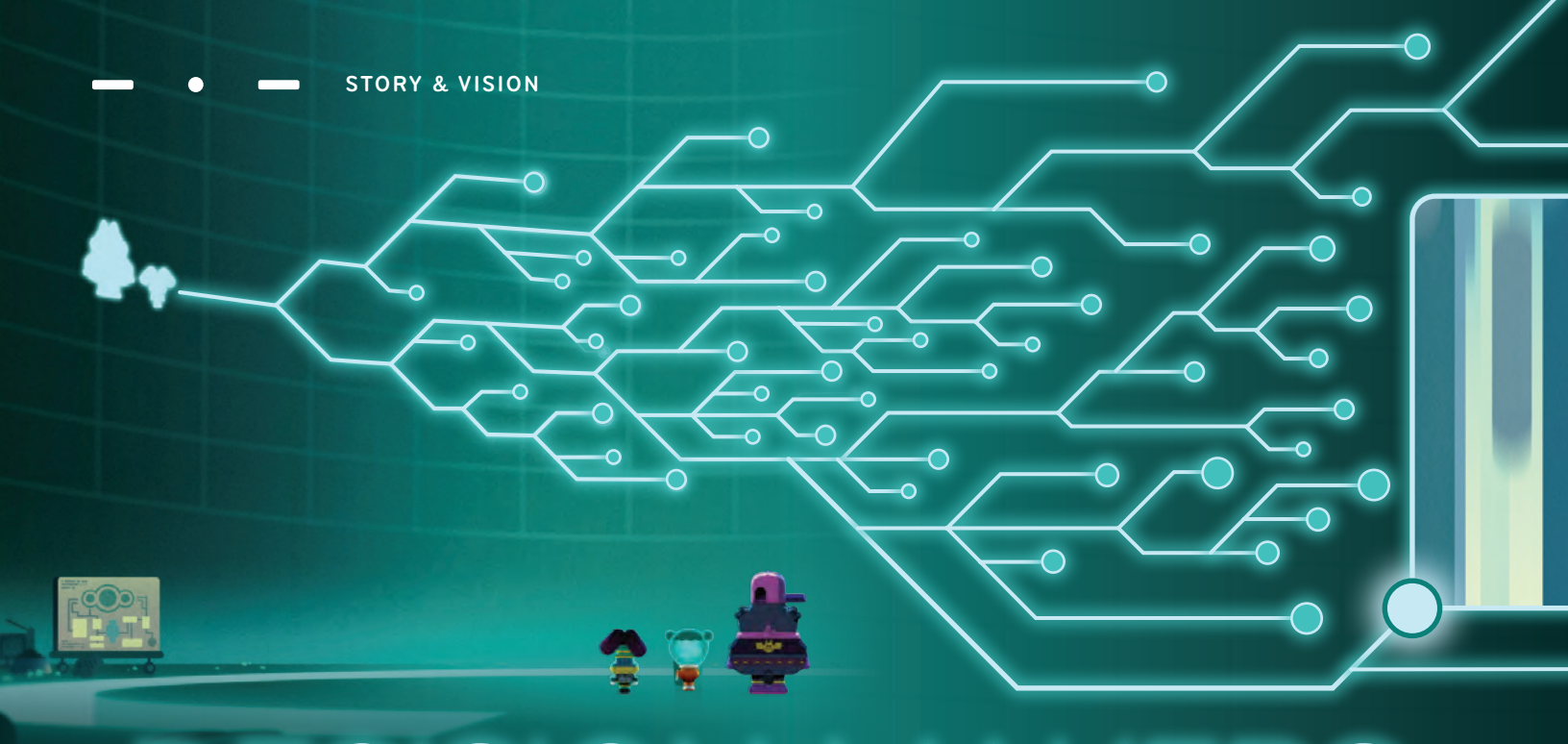
"We're just starting to take the strip to market," Lorenzo says. "It will have different characters and be a whole different thing. That's how much I have enjoyed doing the book ... It has opened up so many doors in my brain."

Ultimately, Lorenzo says he will be pleased if the experiences in *All I Need to Know I Learned from My College Bar* bring as much joy to readers as they brought him to live them. "I want it to be funny and have a heart and messages that are meaningful," he says. "I hope it can maybe lift somebody up on a down day and make them laugh. That's what I try to do with all my writing."

To purchase a copy of Lorenzo's book, visit **fayettevillemafiapress.com**.

– Evan Henerson





DECISION MAKERS

FOR THEIR INTERACTIVE FEATURE, *WE LOST OUR HUMAN*, FOCUSING ON CHARACTER WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT CHOICE FOR CREATORS RIKKE ASBJOERN AND CHRIS GARBUTT.

RIKKE ASBJOERN
CO-CREATOR

CHRIS GARBUTT
CO-CREATOR

As viewers use interactive technology to make decisions for the characters in *We Lost Our Human*, the story branches in seemingly countless different directions.

Eighty-seven billion permutations. To be more precise: you would need to watch and play *We Lost Our Human* 87,178,291,200 times in order to experience every single combination of choices and the resulting outcomes of those combinations.

With a target audience of age seven and up, this interactive special stars two ordinary indoor house pets, Pud the Cat and Ham the Dog. When every human on earth disappears, including their owner, they must venture out into the world for the first time. As they travel through the universe to find their human, the choices they make have consequences. Or rather, the choices made by viewers on their behalf have consequences.

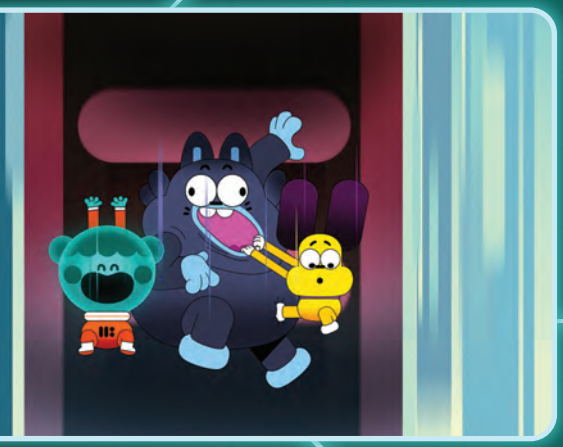
While interactive TV could be used as just another neat trick to keep audiences entertained, Rikke Asbjoern and Chris Garbutt feel differently. The pair created, wrote, directed, and executive produced *We Lost Our Human*, and Garbutt says: "We wanted to avoid the format feeling gimmicky. We wanted it to feel like it was intrinsic to the actual narrative."

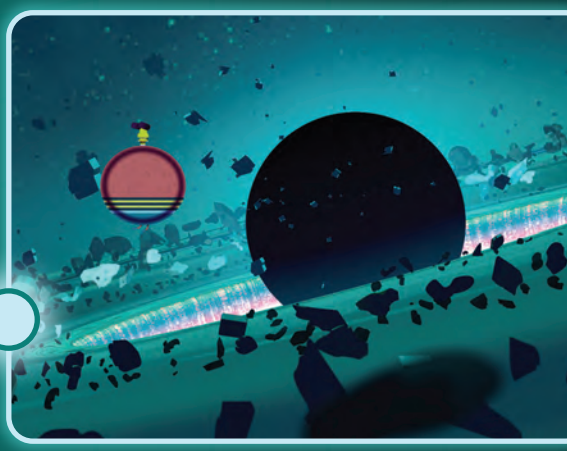
Coming off *Pinky Malinky*, which they also created, in July 2018, they heard that Netflix was looking to do something interactive. They'd been toying with an idea Asbjoern had done on Instagram—a kind of choose your own adventure comic. They pitched their idea and started work in October. They were excited to try something that could only exist in the interactive format, but at the same time they didn't want to backward engineer a show. For them, story came first. "Animals looking for their owner—it's something everyone can connect to and relate to and easily understand," Garbutt says.

The pair started with a traditional linear outline and an emphasis on character development. "You fall in love with the characters because of who they are, not necessarily because you've made decisions for them," Garbutt says.

To achieve this goal, they had to make sure every choice option was character-driven. This wasn't as hard as it sounds, Asbjoern says, "because everything that you do in a day, you're going to have choices. Both of those choices can be very true to you, but you're only going to end up doing one of them." With this in mind, Asbjoern and Garbutt made sure every option felt true to the characters. The scope of these choices ranged from the butterfly effect of picking up a specific small item to morally questionable choices, "to let you explore that and go as dark as you want to ... within the realms of family TV, of course," Garbutt says.

When asked how this all adds up to those 87 billion-plus possibilities, Asbjoern says, "A variation can be just one second, and I guess as soon as you start playing with the math and multiplying, it goes out of control."





We Lost Our Human images courtesy of Netflix

Logistically, as they figured out the storyline, Post-it Notes and index cards covered the wall. From there they built in the interactive components, beginning to decide where choice points would land. Narrative design consultants who had worked on video games helped. "Something they brought to the table that was super important was that every single choice you make needs to be paid off in some way—even if it's minute," Garbutt says. They wanted viewers to have "aha" moments, realizing that what's happening now is because of an earlier choice they made, Asbjoern adds.

In working with choice points, Asbjoern and Garbutt had to contend with technical parameters, especially in regard to frequency. Choice points could be no less than 30 seconds apart and no more than four minutes apart. Less than 30 seconds means there's not enough time while the viewer's choice is buffering. More than four minutes poses the risk of the viewer losing interest and putting down the remote.

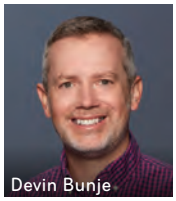
The trick was to balance this technical scaffolding with keeping the story flowing. Each time the story buffers, the narrative needs to keep moving. Asbjoern says this is a little bit easier when working with two characters—they can talk and debate during the time it takes the viewer's choice to kick in.

While technology necessarily encroached on the creative side, Garbutt notes: "That's animation anyway. You're always dealing with technical versus creative. You find different ways to make it work." In this case, the biggest challenge was figuring out the pipeline because the interactive format hasn't been approached on this scale before in animation. While they found this exciting, they emphasize that story will always be of utmost importance. "Thematically, it's about a family," Garbutt says. "Sibling rivalry."

Ham is brought into the happy home of Pud and the human, and Ham and Pud have to figure out their place in their family structure, "to find themselves and how they work with one another," Asbjoern says. They have to disagree and make choices together, and in this respect, Asbjoern and Garbutt hope their show mirrors the experience the audience has while watching it. They want families to watch together and have them be not only interactive with the content, but also interactive with each other.

Garbutt notes that modern viewing habits can be quite solitary, and Asbjoern adds, "I think people need to have some fun together. We hope this could help bring that back a bit."

TRACKING LAUGHS



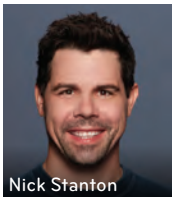


Photo credit: Craig Sjodin

FOR THEIR NEW SERIES *HAILEY'S ON IT!*, DEVIN BUNJE AND NICK STANTON LEANED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WRITERS' ROOM.

A risk-averse teen, Hailey keeps a list of things she's scared to do. But one New Year's Eve she makes a resolution. She's going to do everything on her list. Enter a chaos bot intent on destroying her list. Why? It turns out that facing her fears somehow holds the key to saving future planet Earth.

So how did the creators and Executive Producers of *Hailey's On It!*—Devin Bunje and Nick Stanton—come up with this premise? "When we were developing, we went through a lot of the stuff we loved growing up and shows that still spoke to us on a comedy level now," says Bunje. "The setup we kept coming back to is we liked ordinary kids in extraordinary circumstances. That was a thing we realized we really wanted to do."

Hailey's On It! image courtesy of Disney Channel.

As for two males tackling a 14-year-old female perspective, they credit the many different viewpoints in their diverse, predominantly female writers' room. In addition, the primary relationship on the show is Hailey and her best friend Scott, "so a lot of conversations we had in the room would often end up in our scripts," Stanton says.

As TV veterans, Bunje and Stanton have created and written both live-action and animation shows. With their last live-action project, "we had a big, loud, boisterous room where we would all pitch out jokes and room-write scripts together," says Stanton. "On show night we would have a big live audience to get feedback and rewrite jokes on the fly."

In animation, that kind of last-minute opportunity doesn't exist. For the most part, jokes need to be solid before they head down the pipeline. That's what makes the animation writers' room especially important. "When you're in [that] room together, if you get laughs, you know something is working," Bunje says.

The first season of *Hailey's On It!* had eight writers, not including Bunje and Stanton. They say that number is a lot for animation, and this should have been an advantage. "[But] when we got into production on this show, it was still during the pandemic," says Stanton. "We were doing the writers' room predominately over Zoom, where the timing is off and the dreaded mute button can leave a joke hanging," Bunje says.

To work around the lack of people in the same physical space bouncing off one another's energy, they tried to approximate a writer's room by working as collaboratively as possible. "Even though we rotated names on the scripts, everybody worked together to help make the other scripts as funny as they could be," Bunje says.

The writers also met in a park to punch up jokes—the process where comedy writers work together to sharpen their jokes—and they held weekly Zoom table reads where the writers read various parts for the crew. "It wasn't quite like the real thing, but it definitely gave us some workable feedback," says Stanton. "We like to really hammer the details out so the final script will stay that way."

That said, animation is different from live action in that they might get notes from storyboard artists, animators, and directors along the way. "It's happened every single episode," Bunje says. "They come up with fun little gags or figure out other ways to be additive in general to the show."

Jokes, of course, can't stand on their own. They need a framework, and for *Hailey's On It!*, Bunje says: "There was something really funny to us about everyday tasks. We thought it worked better if ... the more grounded and realistic the characters were in our minds, the more you can have fun with the fact that they were stuck in these out-of-this-world setups."

As for how they make a final call on whether or not a joke works? "A lot of it is just gut feeling," they say. "We try not to overthink it. If people aren't laughing at a joke we think is hilarious, it'll probably get cut. But a laugh can also save a joke that we're on the fence about." Bottom line: "Funny wins."

OUTSTANDING ANIMATED PROGRAM
OUTSTANDING CHARACTER VOICE-OVER PERFORMANCE

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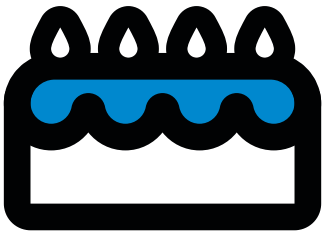
LABOR SCHOOL

THIS YEAR THE **NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS ACT** (NLRA) TURNS **88**. LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS ROBUST OCTOGENARIAN.



WHAT IS IT?

Also known as the Wagner Act, the NLRA is a federal law that gives most workers the legal right to organize or join labor unions, to bargain collectively with their employers, and to undertake collective actions such as strikes. It was signed into law on July 6, 1935, by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

WHY WAS IT ENACTED?

The NLRA was a response to predatory private sector labor and management practices, resulting in a growing labor crisis. It was motivated by social justice, as well as the belief that the general welfare of workers has a direct effect on the U.S. economy.

WHY DOES THE NLRA MATTER TO YOU TODAY?

Not only do you have a right to belong to the union at your place of work—i.e. TAG—or to work collectively with your co-workers to form a union, but you also have protections as a union member. Formed under the NLRA, the National Labor Relations Board is an independent federal agency that has the power to enforce an employer's recognition of the collective efforts of a workforce to unionize. It protects workers against retaliation for participation in union activities, and it can mediate labor disputes, ensuring your union contract is honored. Bottom line: the employment landscape may fluctuate over time, but your NLRA protections don't.

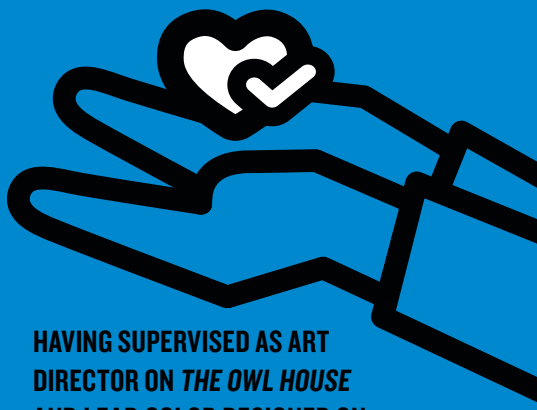
Learn more about the NLRA at ***www.nlrb.gov***.

MEET YOUR TAG STAFF

AMANDA DE LANY

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

SUPPORT SYSTEM



HAVING SUPERVISED AS ART DIRECTOR ON *THE OWL HOUSE* AND LEAD COLOR DESIGNER ON *AMPHIBIA*, ANDY GARNER-FLEXNER SHARES THREE WAYS SUPERVISORS CAN ADVOCATE FOR THEIR STAFF.

BE PROACTIVE

As a supervisor, you should partner with production to ensure schedules and plans meet business and project needs; partner with senior management to ensure your team is healthy and strong; exemplify reliability, accountability, and professionalism in all work-related interactions; and lead by example, creating a strong sense of purpose and community, promoting a culture of excellence and inclusivity, and encouraging a sustainable work/life balance.

PREVENT BURNOUT

If you leave it up to your team to go around you and advocate for themselves to the producer, then you're setting them up for failure. You need to be at the front for them to give them a chance for better working conditions. Be part of the solution. Identify the areas that make you and your team suffer from burnout, and other ways that you and your team are being pinned to do work outside your job descriptions—then you must start conversations with your team to see how to better support them. It is up to you—the supervisor—to bring this information to the producer and work with them to correct the working conditions for your team.

TRACK SALARIES

A supervisor needs to be well-versed in union matters and know how much the people under them are getting paid. For example, if you are not advocating for all of your Color Designers to make the Design Classification rate, then you're not working with the Union, and you're working against your team.

WHAT ARE YOUR JOB DUTIES?

I work under Finance Operations Manager Kristal Landa and Member Operations Manager Leah Semiken. I assist them with anything they may need. These responsibilities vary, from helping with bill printing to sending out various types of mail correspondence and locating files. I am directly responsible for updating member address updates, sending out new member packets to all incoming TAG Members, and issuing membership cards.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR JOB?

I truly enjoy providing support in the office, getting to assist members with any help they may need, and the opportunity to learn even more about the animation industry.

WHAT'S A FUN FACT ABOUT YOU?

In 2016 I wrote and directed my first short film, *Because I Love You*, and even received a few laurels for it, including Official Selection at the California Women's Film Festival and semi-finalist for Los Angeles CineFest. I have always had a love of writing, and I have high hopes for the handful of ideas I have stashed in my Notes app.

STAYING IN CHARACTER

Designing an animated character means more than just creating how the character looks. As three TAG Character Designers share, it requires an understanding of physical movement, technology, and the art of collaboration.

By Kim Fay

MULTI-LAYERED MAGIC

SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE

CHARACTER DESIGNER: KRIS ANKA

In *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, Miles Morales is catapulted across a multiverse filled with Spider-People. All of them are charged with protecting its existence, and all of them have very different ideas about how to do this. Especially Miguel O'Hara, AKA Spider-Man 2099.

Unlike Miles and his predecessor, Peter Parker, Miguel intentionally altered his DNA to become a Spider-Person. Because he played a role in his own transformation, he is as multi-layered as the movie he inhabits—literally. Character Designer Kris Anka approached Miguel in stages, adding layers throughout the process to develop the complexity of this superhero.

When Anka was invited to work on *Across the Spider-Verse* by Joaquim Dos Santos, the film's director, he was already familiar with Miguel. A CalArts graduate, Anka had been working at Marvel comics for eight years, even designing one of Miguel's suits. He had worked in animation before his Marvel stint and was ready to return. Little did he know that his three-month contract would extend to three years, with much of his time focused on Miguel.

While Miguel exists in comics, and screen audiences got a glimpse of him briefly in the end credits of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*, Anka says the sequel's creative team wanted to take a new approach to the character. Some early pre-concept work had been done, and "they knew the vibe they wanted," he says. "They wanted Miguel to be someone who was very proactive. He

"[Miguel] always had to have a presence. When he walked into a room you think, oh, this guy takes things more seriously than everyone else."

— KRIS ANKA

always had to have a presence. When he walked into a room you think, oh, this guy takes things more seriously than everyone else. He had to move in that intentional way—I'm on the hunt—physically intimidating."

The film's Visual Development Artist Spencer Wan did physicality animation tests, giving Anka an understanding of the impact of Miguel's weight. Miguel has claws and doesn't stick to walls, "and he's not lithe, he's not an acrobat. He'll go through a wall rather than find some artful way around it," Anka says. Working with his musculature, he had to figure out how to make Miguel fit in with the visual language of *Spider-Man* while at the same time stand out among the other Spider-People from the previous movie.

"We had two very separate approaches with him," Anka explains. The first was translating the comic design into a character that would work in animation. While the strong red and blue silhouette would remain, in animation action scenes with a lot of movement, "Miguel could accidentally become a muddled mess because of all that blue," says Anka. He added red to Miguel's palms and soles, designed red arm bands that angled in specific directions, and created a red design for the back of his suit that looked different from the front to make sure the audience could always tell what side of his body they were looking at.

With this initial design done, Anka sent Miguel down the pipeline. Then the vis-dev team told him they were working Mesoamerican Burle Marx-influenced patterns into the backgrounds. Marx was a Brazilian landscape architect whose style had distinctive patterns. Like the other Spider-People, Miguel inhabits his own universe—Nueva York in the year 2099. Anka was asked to return to Miguel to unite the character's look with his world. "To make everything feel that Miguel was born in this culture," he says.

Anka spent the next six months focused on working in patterns without breaking the original silhouette. The blue parts would have a faint pattern underneath the digital texturing; the red parts would have the same pattern, but it needed to be stronger. Overall, they wanted three different layers of detailing to the suit, and the challenge, Anka knew, was to "add a sophistication to the design without it being ham-fisted and too noisy. Things can get really loud really fast."

Anka was given some loose patterns to work with, but nothing lined up. He researched everything from Marx's designs to Mesoamerican textiles to architecture for inspiration—and set about experimenting. He tested what would happen if the pattern was curvier, straighter, softer, or more hard-edged. Then he had to ask, "Where does everything fit so it all looks intentional to the anatomy?"

His method was to take all the red parts—the mask, the chest, the arm bands, and the legs—and use each to show how he could break down the pattern and still retain the silhouette. He had vis-dev choose which versions of each body part they liked best. Once he had that, he says, "I would try to holistically find commonalities between those patterns and bring it all into one unified piece."

Now that Miguel was ready to move down the pipeline again, it was decided that Anka would translate the geometric patterns he had designed directly onto the model—not a usual role for a Character Designer. But nothing about Miguel and the rest of the Spider-People was usual. "Every design is wildly asymmetrical including Miguel's body," Anka says. But because he'd been thinking about the patterns for so long, "I could figure out, how does this all really sync up, [so] when it went into animation, everything lined up already," he says.

On and off, Anka spent 16 months working on Miguel. It was a laborious process, but one he gladly undertook in service of the ultimate payoff—a design, he says, "that feels effortlessly that character by the end."

OPPOSITE PAGE: *Anka's first pass at designing Miguel O'Hara.* **THIS PAGE:** *The evolution of the pattern being added to the suit and translating it onto the model.*

WITHIN THE LINES
MONSTER HIGH

CHARACTER DESIGNER: BERTRAND TODESCO

Designing a character is never a solitary venture, but the extent of collaboration can vary widely. For the new reboot of *Monster High*, Lead Character Designer Bertrand Todesco had to work not only with the style of his own team at Nickelodeon, but also with Mattel—the creator of the *Monster High* IP, which includes dolls, an original TV show, live events, and a live-action movie. Having so many parameters could feel binding to some. Not so for Todesco who says, "I'm a solution-driven person."

Born and raised in France, Todesco began his animation career there. By 2017 he was in Paris freelancing on the series *Glitch Techs*, where he worked with Art Director Scott Kikuta. A year later Todesco moved to the U.S. for work, and when Kikuta landed on *Monster High*, he hired Todesco to handle the multiple character design needs.

Todesco was excited. He had been a fan of *Monster High* from its start. The series is about the teenage children of monsters and the high school they attend, and Todesco finds Abbey Bominable the most interesting because she doesn't descend from a typical monster like Frankenstein or Dracula. She's a yeti, and with his love of mythology, he was eager to transform this creature into an appealing teenager. He was also happy to have the freedom to move Abbey's silhouette away from earlier iterations. The new *Monster High* characters have all kinds of body shapes. "It was super important for us to have everybody be able to recognize themselves. To relate to characters," Todesco says.

Because she is a yeti, Abbey is tall. She's also sporty and shy. "This is the kind of information we were given," Todesco says. "It included patterns, color palettes, a mood board with inspirations." He also received the new doll prototype, and because Mattel was working on the dolls at the same time he was working on the TV show concepts, there was plenty of back and forth with the designs. "It's interesting because they give us some ideas, and with those ideas I make something different, [because] it's for a different medium … a different purpose," he says.

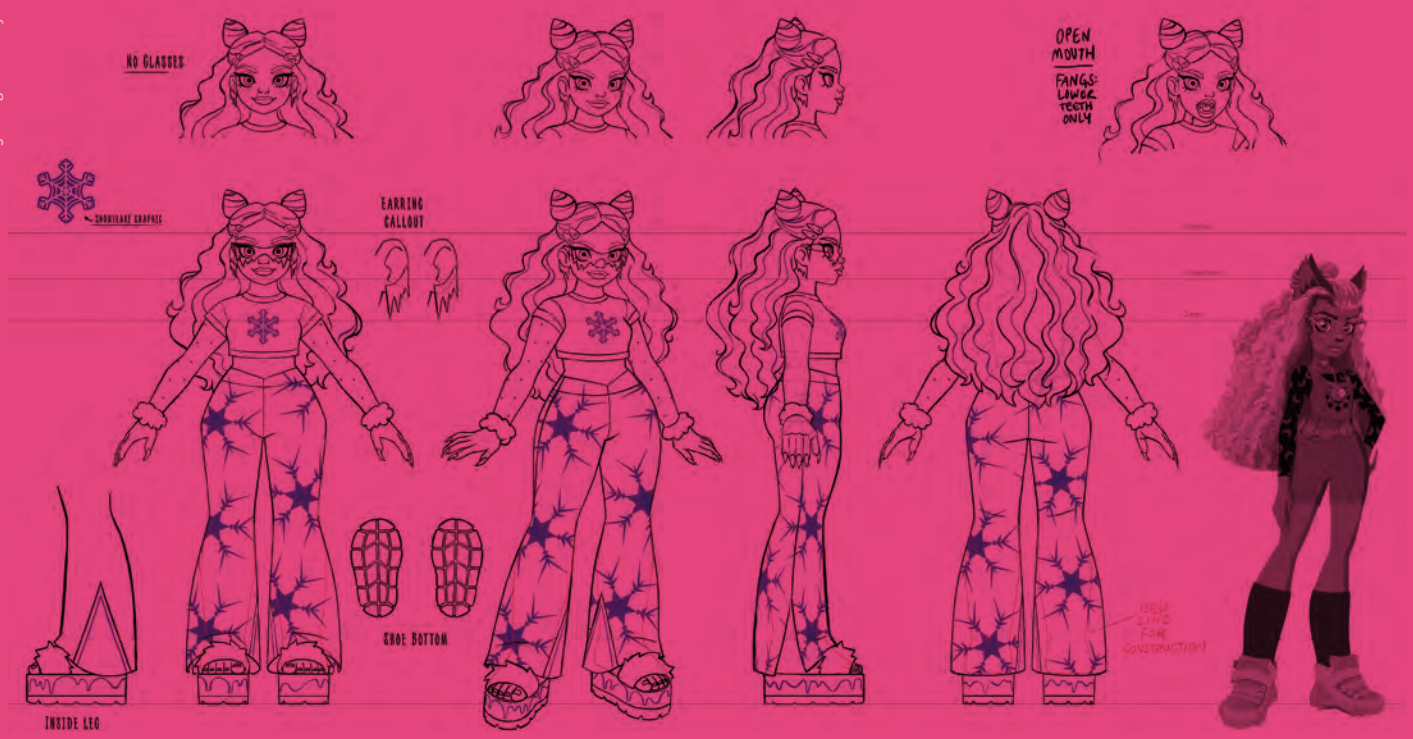
One of the first challenges Todesco faced was fur. In the beginning he wanted Abbey to have short fur like a yeti, but it was difficult to transfer that into CG in a way that stuck to the budget and scheduling restraints of a TV show. As well, the result moved too far away from Mattel's concept, and he wasn't able to make it look convincing with the technology available.

This didn't trouble Todesco, though. He calls it reality and says, "That's what's supercool. You have to find solutions. I always make different proposals, and if some proposal is not the best, we can repivot to some other idea. You have many ways to draw one character—to adapt one character." His pivot in this case was to give Abbey an iridescence and incorporate snowflakes into her clothing to reflect the snowy climate she comes from. And he was still able to work in some fur by using it on her cuffs and shoes.

"You have to find the best way that works for the show's [CG] technique," Todesco says, to avoid technical problems.

> "It was super important for us to have everybody be able to recognize themselves. To relate to characters."
>
> — BERTRAND TODESCO

Monster High images courtesy of Nickelodeon.



Another example he gives is the feet. The animated characters needed bigger feet than the dolls. "In animation you need to have the shadows on the floor. You need to see the contact," he says. If a character is given long legs and very tiny feet, when they are running, it can look like they are flying. "It really helps the animation that they have bigger feet." At the same time, he had to make sure larger feet didn't look clunky and weird.

Other issues Todesco had to address included hair. The Abbey doll has hair to her knees, but it was too difficult to make that same style work in CG. He also had to rework Abbey's pants. On the doll, parts of the pants are transparent. Because 3D models are made of polygon shapes, when two shapes overlap—like the joints at the knee—you can see them "collide" against each other. To avoid this, Todesco had to rework the design with an opaque fabric.

While Todesco enjoyed the technical aspects of working on Abbey, he connected with her on a personal level. "She's from the southeast of Asia, and she has an accent. I'm from a different country, and I have an accent," he says. Diving into the cultural aspects of the character with a cultural consultant, he says finding ways for the audience to understand visually a character's cultural background can get tricky. "You have to be cliché, but also not [create] a caricature," he says. He offers his own country as an example. "If we have to create a French character, I don't know if I would give him a baguette and a beret. At the same time, it's a cliché that works."

Being in on the ground floor, Todesco was able to follow the characters from their initial concepts to the final models. "It's rewarding for me to see the full process," he says. And despite all the influences coming from various directions: "It gives you boundaries. I really love when I have to create characters from scratch, but for this show it's cool because ... I'm working with CG. I'm working with the Art Director. I'm working with the Showrunner. We are all working in the [same] direction to make the best character."

OPPOSITE PAGE AND THIS PAGE:
Todesco used iridescence and a snowflake pattern to suggest that Abbey Bominable is from a snowy climate. He also made her feet bigger than on the Abbey doll so that the design would work in CG.

Krappopolis images courtesy of FOX.

OPPOSITE PAGE: *Ristaino's designs reflect a few of the different directions he took during the process of creating the character Deliria.*
THIS PAGE: *The final version of Deliria.*

EDGY EVOLUTION
KRAPOPOLIS

CHARACTER DESIGNER: ANDY RISTAINO

When Character Designer Andy Ristaino starts working on a character, he riffs, drawing many different designs. It's an approach that's served him well over a career that includes Storyboard Artist on *Midnight Gospel* and Designer and Storyboard Artist on *Adventure Time*, where he earned an Emmy Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Animation. Landing at Bento Box to help develop pilots, "They'd bring in new projects, and I'd take a stab at what the look [would be]," he says. "They had other designers do the same thing for *Krapopolis*, but they finally chose the stuff I did." Stuff, he adds, that looks drastically different from the designs they finally landed on.

Not that this troubles Ristaino. "We'll get closer and closer, and at some point they'll be like, this isn't quite working. We're not back to square one, but we'll take where we're at and redesign it and go in different directions. ... For each of these characters, there is a long evolution. For me, that's what's most interesting. To see how a character has changed before we even get to see them onscreen."

The forthcoming *Krapopolis* is an adult animated TV series from *Rick and Morty* co-creator Dan Harmon. It's about the start of one of the world's first cities in mythical ancient Greece. Among the characters Ristaino designed for the show, Deliria is the mother of the main character, King Tyrannis. She is described as the goddess of self-destruction and questionable choices—it's no surprise that she almost always has a wine chalice in her hand. "When we first started working on her, they were thinking more Elizabeth Taylor and Cleopatra—that kind of look," Ristaino says. But this didn't feel right, so he kept riffing. "There are designs that made her look more rock and roll and edgier, and designs that made her look more like a goddess."

"For each of these characters, there is a long evolution. For me, that's what's most interesting. To see how a character has changed before we even get to see them onscreen."

— ANDY RISTAINO

Even though Deliria has been kicked off Mount Olympus, as the creative team developed her personality more, they wanted to show that she was still a god, which meant she had to look regal. At the same time, Ristaino says: "She's a rebel god. She likes to do things her own way and she doesn't take guff from anyone." To get this idea across Ristaino made her a little messy—loose hair and her gown sliding off her shoulder. He also used her eye design with its gaudy makeup to convey her defiant attitude, explaining, "I was thinking about Agnes Morehead from Bewitched."

Despite Ristaino's significant role in designing the characters, he doesn't feel the show is representative of his style. He describes his design sensibilities as abstract, cartoony, and freeform, while *Krapopolis* is more realistic than what he usually does. That said, he can still see what he calls DNA from his sensibility in Deliria's hands and feet, her hair, and her eyes. "There's a simplicity to Deliria's design that feels more like what I would have brought in," he says.

Was it hard to embrace a different style? He says it's still a challenge, but adds, "I love the process." Early on he spent a lot of time hanging out with Harmon. "He thinks out loud. I loved being a part of that and getting a window into his thoughts," says Ristaino. As he collaborated with Harmon and others, the style of the characters evolved, with Ristaino "keying in on what they wanted through my designs. ... I've been working on this show for over two years now. It's like you grow into the role. You learn, oh, this is how you do this from drawing the characters over and over again."

But drawing Deliria to the point where everyone was happy with the way she looked did not mean that he was done. Once the animation process began and footage started coming back, they realized that they needed to fix her turn. Ristaino explains that for each main character, an eight-point turn was designed for a 360-degree view. "For Deliria, when her front view transitioned to a side view, there was something weird happening with the turn," Ristaino says. "We had to go in and redesign her head a little bit, and redesign her front view, just to make it work better in animation."

For such a small issue, it may seem like a lot of work, but Ristaino explains that a turn can be essential to understanding a character like Deliria. "With any character, that's the challenge," he says. "Trying to get someone's personality across." How do you dress them to express that? How do they stand to express that? And how do you pull it all off without making it too obvious? In Ristaino's case, he keeps on riffing until he gets it right.

HOW TO GET A BOOK DEAL

By Karen Briner


Almond Talent

ASHLYN ANSTEE
SUPERVISING DIRECTOR


Thomas Pickwood

MEGHAN BOEHMAN
BACKGROUND DESIGNER


Thomas Pickwood

RACHAEL BRINER
BACKGROUND DESIGNER

JOEY CHOU
VISUAL DEVELOPMENT ARTIST

BRANDON HOANG
STAFF WRITER

BRIAN KESINGER
HEAD OF STORY & CHARACTER DESIGNER

NILAH MAGRUDER
STORYBOARD REVISIONIST & WRITER


Adriana J. Boyd

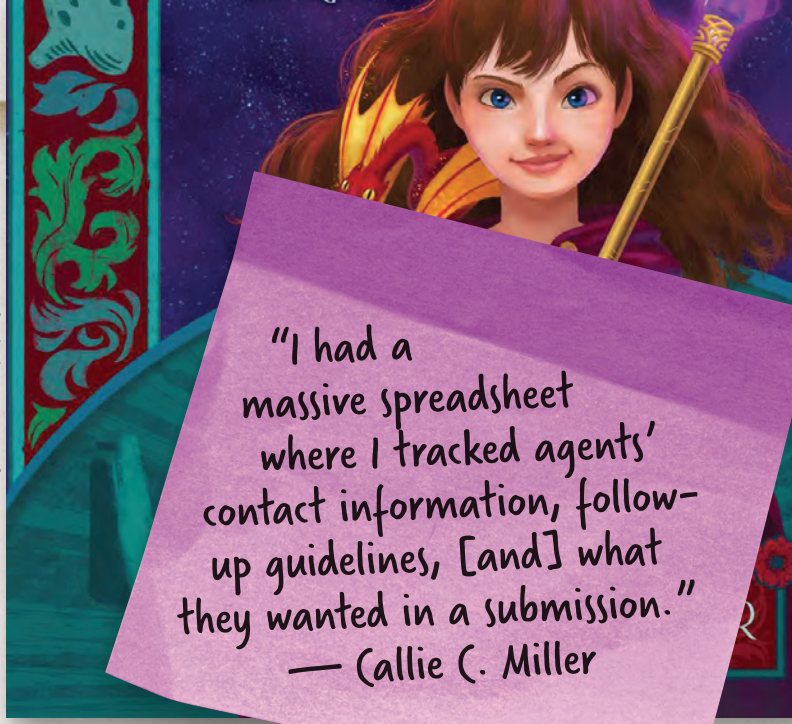
CALLIE C. MILLER
WRITER

LIZA SINGER
DIRECTOR & STORY ARTIST

RACHEL ALTEMOSE
JUNIOR LITERARY AGENT, SALKY LITERARY MANAGEMENT

DANIEL LAZAR
LITERARY AGENT, WRITERS HOUSE

TAG members and publishing industry insiders share insights on the ins and outs of getting your book published



The Hunt for the Hollower property of Aladdin/Simon & Schuster.

"I had a massive spreadsheet where I tracked agents' contact information, follow-up guidelines, [and] what they wanted in a submission."
— Callie C. Miller

Have you dreamed up a great fictional character? Or maybe you have a story percolating inside you that feels like it should be on a page instead of a screen? Well, you're not alone. When they're not working away at their animation jobs, many of your fellow Guild members illustrate and/or write everything from picture books and graphic novels to middle grade and young adult (YA) prose novels.

So how do you actually get a book deal? Do you reach out to an agent with a final manuscript? Can you just pitch an idea or show your portfolio? While everyone's path to getting a traditional book deal is a little different, there are some essential steps to follow.

OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Rough page from the dummy for Anstee's *No, No, Gnome!*; detail from Chou's *Group Hug*; rough sketches from Singer's *Wayward: Fractured Shadows*. **THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:** Interior art and cover image from Miller's *The Hunt for the Hollower*; the cover of Hoang's YA novel *Gloria Buenrostro Is not My Girlfriend*.

AGENTS' SECRETS

You've written and/or illustrated your book, and it might feel that after all the polishing and fine-tuning, the job is done. In fact, now the harder work begins: finding an agent.

An agent is almost always essential since most editors at traditional publishing houses will only accept agented material. An agent also negotiates your book deal for you and fights on your behalf for the best possible outcome, while you continue to concentrate on what is most important: creating.

Junior Literary Agent Rachel Altemose advises that you study agency websites and agents' Twitter pages to see if they are taking on new clients and evaluate what kind of work they are interested in. Look for agents and publishers who specialize in your genre and study the books they represent to see if your work might be a good fit.

Brandon Hoang, whose YA novel *Gloria Buenrostro Is not My Girlfriend* will come out this summer, recommends checking out Manuscript Wish List, a website that contains a database of agents and what they are looking to buy. "It's almost like a dating profile," he says.

While it can feel like a daunting task, doing the research is key to finding the right agent. "I had a massive spreadsheet where I tracked agents' contact information, follow-up guidelines, [and] what they wanted in a submission," says Callie C. Miller, author of the upcoming middle-grade novel *The Hunt for the Hollower*.

Gloria Buenrostro Is not My Girlfriend property of Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

THE QUERY AND BEYOND

Once you have your list of potential agents, the next step is crafting that all-important document, the query letter. In this one-page cover letter you pitch your project and introduce yourself to an agent, convincing them that your work is both interesting and marketable.

Altemose—who prefers to receive submissions through her page on the QueryTracker website—suggests customizing each query so your manuscript sounds like an excellent fit for an individual agent's list. She appreciates it when an author has a sense of what she's looking for and mentions one of her favorite books. "Those are the first manuscripts I pull out of my reading pile," she says. Show you've done your homework by mentioning titles of books that are comparable to your original work, as these are crucial for selling a project to an editor.

Along with your query, you'll need to submit materials which will vary based on your genre and an agent's submission guidelines. Literary Agent Daniel Lazar advises that for picture books, writers and illustrators should storyboard the entire book. This document is called a picture book dummy, which is "essentially your picture book idea fully sketched out," says Nilah Magruder, an artist and author who has published numerous books in all genres, both original and IP.

Ashlyn Anstee, the author and illustrator of board books, picture books, and young reader graphic novels, explains that she roughs out a dummy just like she would rough storyboards. The dummy mimics a standard 32-page picture book, which equals 16 PDF pages. She does them in black and white and keeps the drawings loose. She lays the text out roughly, as well. Then, she usually includes two finished "spreads" (two pages, side by side) along with her dummy, where the rough art is replaced with final art to show what it would look like in a completed book.

Longer illustrated books, like graphic novels, are often sold on proposal, Lazar says, "so you don't need to create the whole manuscript on spec." He also advises, "Avoid breaking your book down like a TV pitch deck—instead, develop sample material that might capture a reader quickly browsing in a bookstore. ... What do you want them to see? That's probably what I want to see."

With a prose manuscript, most agents request a summary and first few pages. It they're interested they might then ask for the first couple chapters or first 50 pages. "If the agent is still interested," says Hoang, "they will request a 'full'—that's industry lingo for a full manuscript." He recommends that you only query an agent for a prose novel once you have a completed manuscript. "You don't want to be in a situation where the agent or editor asks for a full and you have to sheepishly explain you don't have one ready," he adds.

PUBLISHING 101

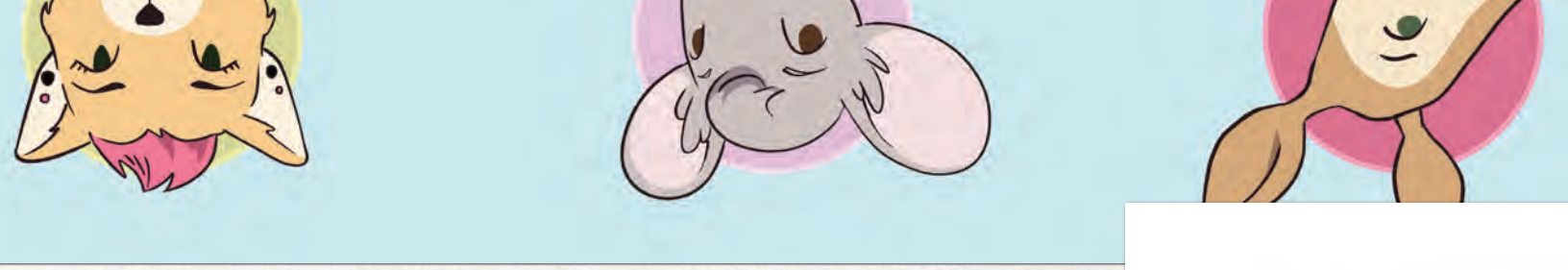
Traditional Book Deal – This is the kind of book deal covered in this article. It means that a publisher buys your story and/or illustrations and takes on the responsibility for printing, marketing, and selling your book.

Indie Book Deal – This deal is similar to a traditional book deal, but with smaller, independent publishing houses, you can often bypass an agent and submit directly to the house. Guidelines are usually available on the publisher's website.

Self-Publishing – Just like it sounds, you publish your book yourself, taking on sole responsibility for printing, publishing, marketing, and sales.

TOP: Interior page from Anstee's *Are We There, Yeti?*
BOTTOM: Detail from the cover of Magruder's *Wutaryoo*.

Wutaryoo property of Versify.



Are We There, Yeti? property of Simon & Schuster, Books for Young Readers.

TRUST THE PROCESS

How long will it take to get an agent? Response times vary, depending on how busy an agent is, and it's advisable to send your queries out simultaneously since it can take months to hear back, and many agents only respond to submissions that interest them.

Meghan Boehman says it can be hard to continue to push your story or judge when it's time to put it down and try something new, but remaining tenacious despite those roadblocks is essential to your success. She co-created the forthcoming middle grade graphic novel *Dear Rosie* with Rachael Briner, and she says: "No matter how wonderful your story and artwork, your pitch needs to hit the right desk at the right time; rejections aren't

ABOVE: Sample pitch illustrations from Boehman and Briner's *Dear Rosie*. **RIGHT:** Detail from *Dear Rosie*.

Dear Rosie property of Knopf Books for Young Readers.

Off the Beaten Path

You never know where an agent might "discover" your work. Lazar spots potential creators on social media, on advertisements, at comic conventions, and on cartoonist blogs or newsletters. Pitch fests, MFA open houses, and book competitions also offer potential.

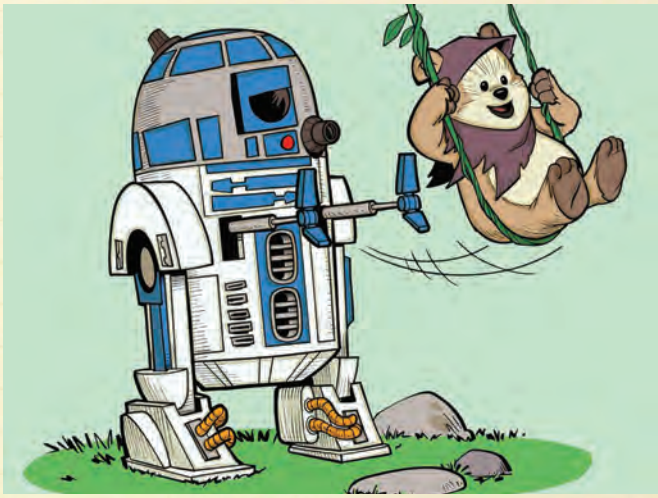
The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) offers invaluable opportunities for connection. Anstee met an agent while participating in a SCBWI portfolio event and says they clicked instantly, leading to representation. Joey Chou recommends exhibiting at conventions like Comic-Con and says that these days he often gets contacted directly through Instagram or Facebook. Singer says that they also post a lot of personal creative work online, and they were contacted by an agent via social media who'd been impressed by an animatic piece they'd made.

There are also less obvious routes to consider. "We once fell in love with some hand-painted tote bags in a boutique, so we asked the store owner for the illustrator's contact information. Now she's part of our client list!" Altemose says.

Then there's the case of Brian Kesinger, in which publishing small and local paid off. His second book with indie press Baby Tattoo caught the attention of editors at Marvel Comics, who hired him to illustrate a standalone comic series. This sparked interest from editors at Lucasfilm, and the next thing he knew, he was illustrating two picture books for them.

Buster and the Haunted Banjo property of Baby Tattoo Books.

Star Wars R2-D2 is Lost! property of Disney Lucasfilm Press.



Kesinger's books include *Buster and the Haunted Banjo* and *Star Wars R2-D2 Is Lost!*

"If you are used to the fast-paced nature and turnaround of animation it may startle or concern you at first ... The pace is much slower."
—Liza Singer

MONEY, HONEY

A reputable agent never asks for money up front. Your agent works on commission, and when they sell your book, from that point on they receive a percentage of what you earn (commonly 10% to 15%).

For your sale to the publisher, you will most likely receive an advance. (IP tends to be the exception, paying a flat fee.) This amount varies widely, but it is paid up front. You will not make any more than your advance until your book "sells out." This means that your book has earned enough to cover your advance. You earn this money based on a percentage of your sales—usually authors get about 10% of the book's cover price. Once you've earned your advance, that percentage becomes your royalties.

Most publishing contracts are standard, and it's up to your agent to negotiate the best contract on your behalf.

ABOVE: Detail from Singer's *Wayward: Fractured Shadows*.

necessarily indicative of the quality of your book. Be open to feedback from editors, even during rejections, and ask yourself what you're open to changing and what must remain constant."

After submitting queries to 25 different literary agencies, Boehman and Briner were "extremely fortunate" to hear back in less than 24 hours from an agent; it took several weeks to hear back from other agencies, and some did not respond at all. For Magruder it took about half a year of querying to get her first agent offer, and Hoang received rejections from many agents until ultimately a friend he'd encouraged to become an agent signed him as her first client in 2015 and sold his first manuscript in 2020.

Miller also queried for several years with different projects. In 2020, she eventually signed with her agent, and her debut sold in 2021. "A lot of it is out of your control, so focus on what you *can* control: being the best writer you can be and working on the next project," she says.

LET'S MAKE A DEAL

Once you have the best version of your material, your agent will prepare a list of publishers they plan to submit to. "From there," says Anstee, "you wait, sometimes weeks—and then the no's will start rolling in."

Going on submission with editors varies just as much as the process for querying agents. "So much of it comes down to timing and luck," Miller says. Her book was out on submission for about a year and a half before it sold, while one of Magruder's books took about a year of submissions before an offer was made. That said, her fastest offer came in less than a week.

Liza Singer is the author and illustrator of the middle grade fantasy graphic novel *Wayward: Fractured Shadows*, due out in 2025. They and their agent selected the story that felt the strongest for the present market and put together a proposal packet. After a series of back-and-forth edits, their agent submitted, and the book went to auction and sold in under two months. "It was quite an overwhelmingly positive moment, especially as a first-time publication," they say.

Boehmer and Briner's first pitch went on several unsuccessful rounds of submissions, so they agreed to temporarily shelve the idea. It was their third pitch that was finally accepted, 22 months after getting agent representation. Since they were first-time authors, their editor wanted to see story revisions before offering a deal. They did two revisions, which they say "paid off with an offer, a stronger story, and a solid relationship with a talented editor!"

Hoang points out that once an editor expresses interest in buying your manuscript, the battle isn't over. "It's the same as when a development exec buys your pitch—it doesn't mean it's an automatic greenlight," he says. An editor has to get the approval of their boss and team, "so your project can die on the vine at any point for any variety of reasons." Or it can take an unexpected turn. His graphic novel started off as a prose manuscript that an editor asked him to consider adapting.

SURVIVING PRE-PUBLICATION

Beyond making the strongest deal possible, an agent should help guide a creator through the full publishing process, Lazar says: "Though I defer creatively to the publisher's editor and designer when the book is acquired, I remain part of the ongoing conversation around titles, covers, marketing, publicity, and how a single title may evolve into an ongoing series."

It's worth noting that most often things move slowly in the world of traditional publishing. Timelines for publication vary, and in many cases it can take a full two years after signing your book deal before the final product hits the shelves. Miller's debut book, for example, sold during the summer of 2021 and will come out during the summer of 2023. In that time, she worked on revisions with her editor, then did a copyedit pass, and then a pass on the PDF proof pages.

During a four-year process, Singer says, "I have been going through the book from manuscript to roughs/pencils to inks to final color. If you are used to the fast-paced nature and turnaround of animation it may startle or concern you at first … The pace is much slower. Every point of contact is a bit slower. Feedback is a bit slower, etc. [but] that doesn't mean it's not happening! Patience is truly key in how you collaborate and work with publishers."

One thing you can do is use the slower pace to prepare for your book's debut. "The book is usually finished a year before publication, and then that year is devoted to marketing and printing," says Magruder, while Hoang adds, do what you can but don't stress out. "With kids, my day job being staffed on a series, and other projects, I am already stretched thin, so I only allow myself to do promotional things that I am excited about," he says.

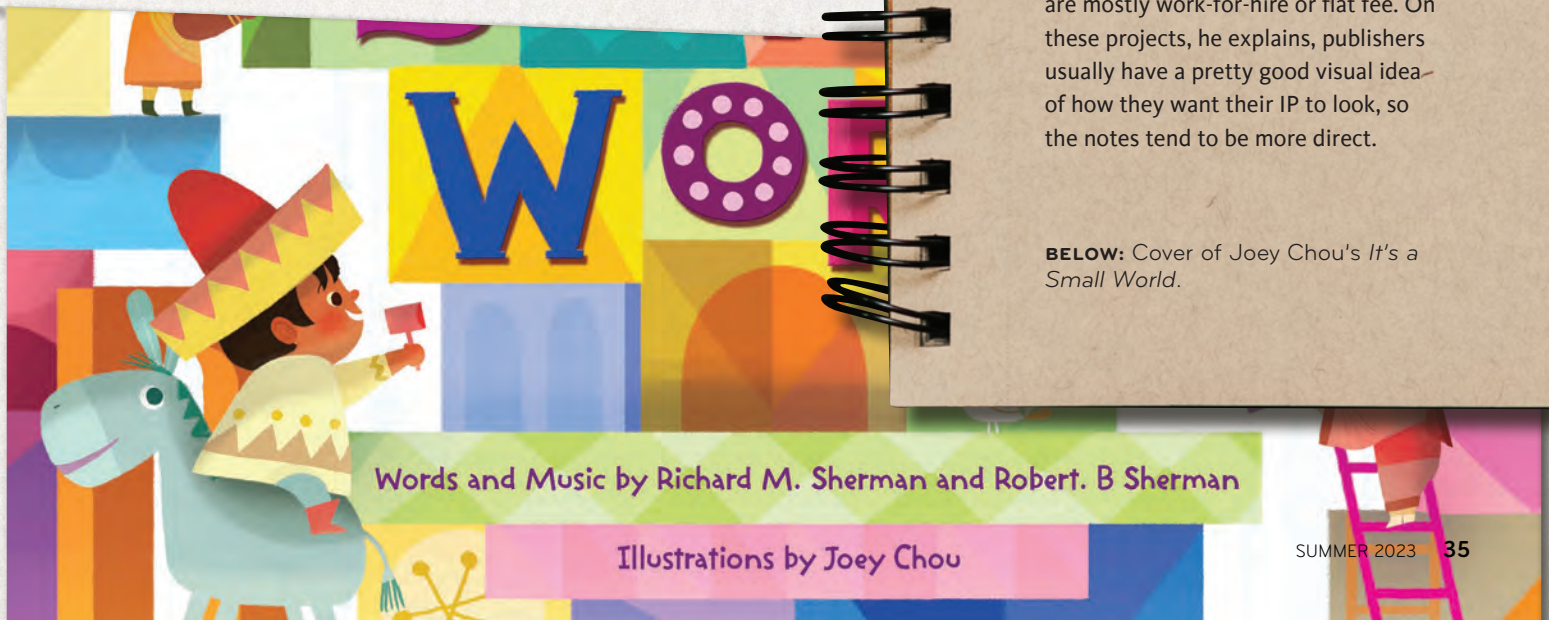
Also use the pace to enjoy the ride. For picture book writer and illustrator Brian Kesinger, all that anticipation is worth the wait. "I can tell you there is no greater feeling than when your first book comes back from the printer," he says. "Nothing beats that new book smell."

You Just Wanna Draw

Illustrators who don't write can submit illustrations directly to agents. For picture books they should show children's book-friendly illustrations they've done, or if they're aiming for an older market, the illustrations should communicate what their specialty is.

Altemose says her agency seeks illustrators who could be a good fit for an existing author on their list, or illustrators who feel totally different from any other illustrators on their list. They like to create author/illustrator "teams" for picture books, pairing an author and illustrator who are similar in style or tone.

Joey Chou, who has illustrated dozens of children's books—both original content by other authors and IP—explains that sometimes he pitches visual ideas to his agent who will reach out to publishers. Other times publishers reach out to his agent with projects they think fit his art style. His agent will send him the manuscript to see if he's interested in illustrating the project. If he is, then fees, deadlines, and copyrights are negotiated before the work begins. If that project is IP, he says the process is similar to doing freelance design for animation, and the projects are mostly work-for-hire or flat fee. On these projects, he explains, publishers usually have a pretty good visual idea of how they want their IP to look, so the notes tend to be more direct.



BELOW: Cover of Joey Chou's *It's a Small World*.

Wayward: Fractured Shadows property of Henry Holt.

It's a Small World property of Disney Press.

LET'S GET Kraken

By Alexandra Drosu

FX proved key to transformation—both physical and emotional—in DreamWorks' new film *Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken*.

Ruby is the first female title character in a DreamWorks animated film.

What do you do when your title character is a kraken? You turn the sea monster trope upside down and transform a mythical beast into a teenager trying to fit into high school. *Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken* centers on the relationship between Ruby and her mother, Agatha, who has transplanted her family to a quirky seaside town and tasked them to blend in by claiming they're from Canada. No easy feat since they are blue, squid-like creatures. The one major rule: stay away from water because of its hidden dangers.

Ruby dutifully obeys her mom until faced with the prospect of attending high school prom with her crush, Connor. The event takes place on a ship, which would break her mother's cardinal rule. As Ruby tests teenage boundaries, she unveils a family secret that makes her question her mother and sets her on a journey of self-discovery. The film may be a heartwarming coming of age story, but it's the visual FX that are integral in capturing her transformation.

Images courtesy of DreamWorks

GLOW UP

During a promposal mishap, love interest Connor accidentally gets knocked into the ocean. Ruby is faced with a conundrum—go against her mother's rule to avoid water or jump in to try and save him. She dives in. As she sinks to the bottom of the ocean, her lungs fill with saltwater and the giant kraken inside of her is awakened. She begins to glow and transforms into the sea creature.

The artists on the project refer to this transformation as the kraken's activated form, a translucent bioluminescent glow that radiates from inside the body. Turning the character essentially into a light source demanded a close collaboration between lighting and FX.

"We provide a 3D map to lighting so they can illuminate the progression of what's going on," says Lawrence Lee, Head of FX. This map consisted of volumetric data that directed when and where to activate lights on the character's body.

It allowed the lighting department to create "the effect of the glowing [path] starting from the hand and then traveling up the body," says Joanna Wu, Head of Lighting. Plus, Ruby's activated form radiates light on objects and characters around her. The pink light casts a flattering glow on other characters and creates an intentional connection between them, says Wu. Plus, her energy affects environments and locations like an underwater castle, which reacts to her presence by glowing pink.

When Ruby first transforms into a kraken, the energy she emits in the ocean draws the attention of her estranged grandmother. Ruby learns that she and her mother are part of kraken royalty tasked with protecting the seas from evil enemies, including Nerissa, a mermaid who stole a magical trident that transformed her into a threatening titan. Grandmamma shares with Ruby that many years ago her mother battled Nerissa and hid the powerful weapon inside a magnetic volcano for safekeeping before escaping from the kraken kingdom onto dry land.

THIS PAGE (TOP): *Ruby, the giant Kraken;* **(BOTTOM):** *Ruby's bioluminescent glow is activated in a final render.* **OPPOSITE PAGE (INSET):** *Storyboard by Carlos Romero.*

GO WITH THE FLOW

Ruby believes that the trident is the key to restoring peace in the kingdom (and her family) and vows to find it. But where do you hide an all-powerful weapon that can grant almost invincible power? "It couldn't be behind a wall with a lock on it," says Director Kirk DeMicco. "We had to work with FX in creating obstacles and environments that lived up to a giant kraken."

Production Designer Pierre-Olivier Vincent was intrigued by dramatic underwater volcanos and used the idea as a starting point. "Sea creatures perceive their environment slightly differently," he says. "They can find their way according to magnetism." So he coupled the idea of forceful magnetic currents with an underwater volcano to provide a training ground for Ruby to test her powers and learn how to use them, all while trying to retrieve the trident.

"It could be really cool to visualize those incredible flows," Vincent says, like flares on the surface of the sun, while also embracing the poetry and scale of the cosmos. "There was that foreboding feeling of immensity, danger, and also beauty combined together."

"Ruby dives into the currents and interacts with them," says Lee, so FX Supervisor Derek Cheung had to build curves that essentially bent around the character as she battles through them to reach the center of the volcano, almost like a heat shield. Lee and the FX team turned to real-life inspiration watching the way smoke filters around airplanes in wind tunnels. Cheung attached volumetric elements to the character's animation paths to generate the currents around Ruby and make it appear as if she is meeting resistance.

The currents get more chaotic as Ruby gets closer to the center of volcano, and the ripples mimic the shape language of the entire film. Inspired by the psychedelic era and graphic designer Milton Glaser, Vincent incorporated curvy design concepts from that era that were playful and colorful throughout the film, and FX used the shape language to stylize the currents. Vincent had a color palette in mind, so the FX team followed his suggestions and created a randomized pattern that cycled through the colors and could be adjusted in terms of brightness by the lighting department.

"Ruby's activated form radiates light on objects and characters around her. The pink light casts a flattering glow on other characters and creates an intentional connection between them."

WAVES OF FURY

Mermaids are often depicted as temptresses luring doomed sailors with their siren call, and this film taps into the mythological creature's dark side with the return of Nerissa and a plot twist that pits her against the krakens in a Pacific Rim-style, kaiju battle.

Water interactions at this large scale are always challenging and expensive, but the filmmakers also envisioned the sequence to be balletic and elegant, adds DeMicco. "We wanted an element of surprise," adds Vincent. Using water as a dramatic statement, he envisioned Nerissa as drawing power from the ocean to create waves of turbulent water hair.

"We're helping them conceptually," says Vincent, "but FX is such a powerful department, dealing with all the reality of that element and calibrating it to our needs. It looks a little bit like magic."

The FX team faced three main challenges transforming Nerissa into a fighting titan with cascading hair. The character is a 300-foot mermaid half submerged in water that can travel at speeds of over 100 mph, says FX Supervisor Mark Newport of the first challenge to address the scale and the speed. Next, they had to create the appearance of water being sucked up into her hair that is also illuminated from an internal glow. The third challenge was the sheer number of shots, about 71, ranging from close-up headshots to full body fighting interactions.

The solution was a multi-technique approach. The modeling department created a tubular structure for the overall shape of the hair, then Character FX ran a soft body simulation to give the hair weight and scale, and a more flowy feel. Next, Newport applied some procedural ridges to the hair to make it appear more like strands. They needed to essentially bundle strands of hair together, and in order to do so, Research and Development developed a new filleting tool that creates a smooth curve shape between two angles to look like "they're joining together rather than being a sharp disconnected angle," says Newport.

Once the overall geometry of the hair was finalized, they turned their attention to the material qualities to make it react like water but also reflect the concept of glowing hair. The geometry mesh was transparent; while the internal volume had two fields, a density field that essentially absorbed and scattered the light to make it appear to glow brighter at the scalp and an incandescent field that emitted light.

Newport generated a curve through the center of the hair bundles that was used like a suction force in the fluid simulation in order to make it appear as if the energy of the ocean was being sucked into their hair. A churning force was applied to generate more white-water foam around the base of the hair to integrate more seamlessly with the ocean. Other volumetric paths included two different kinds of foam and two different types of spray. The spray needed to both tear away from the body and travel with the character.

As the titan mermaid battles, she makes some fast, sweeping motions. In the real world, the spray would fall almost like a curtain of water, but in the film it had to also travel with her. Newport created a local spray that would essentially stay with the character as she moved, while the world spray could tear away from her body. The spray simulation had a corresponding mist element "to basically represent fine water particles that kind of vaporized almost like a waterfall type effect. So, you've got local spray and then you've got a volumetric mist," says Newport.

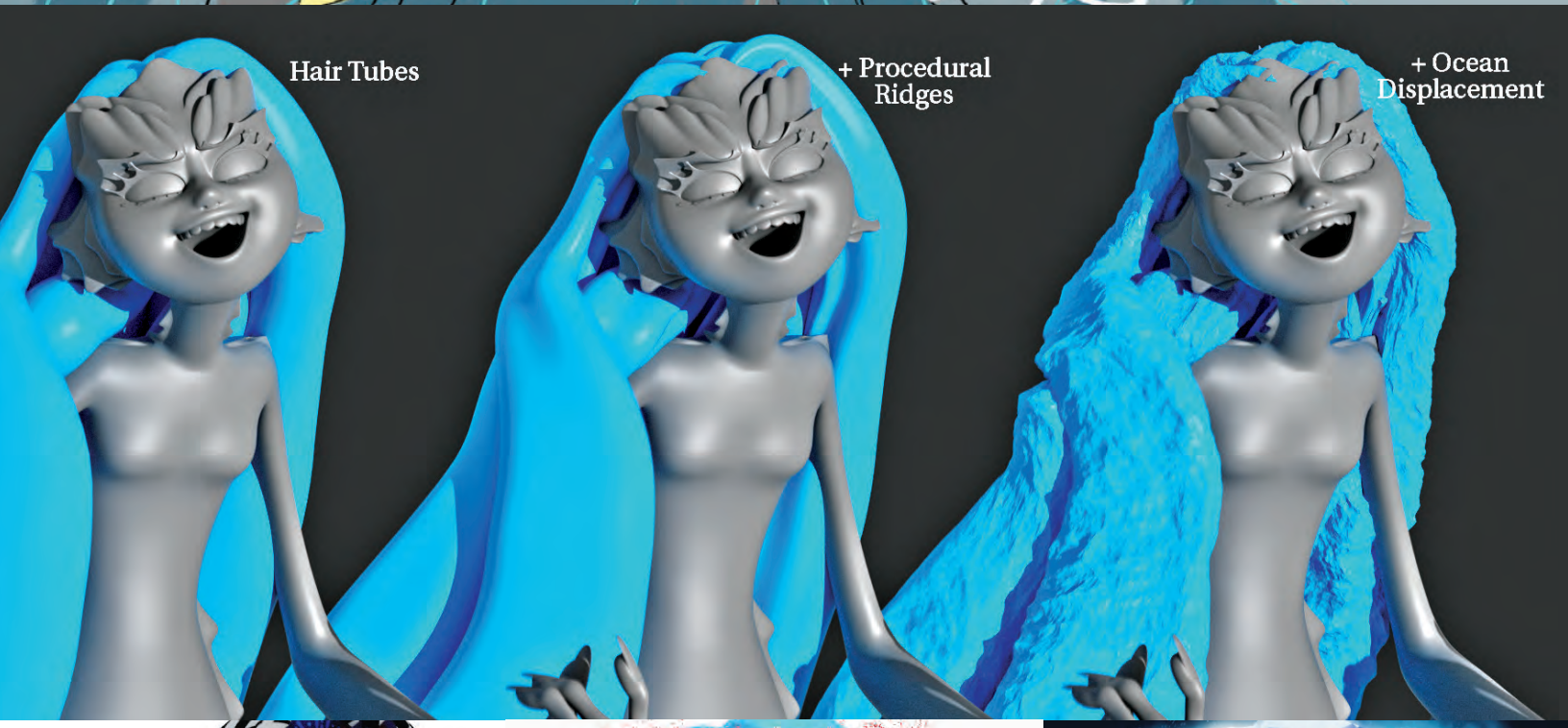
The tools that Newport set up would get the FX artist working on the shot about 75 to 80 percent there, but then controls allowed for customization. For example, at Nerissa's speed and scale in the fighting sequences "she just ends up becoming a big ball of spray," says Newport. The controls made it easier for the FX team to clear out the face so it wouldn't be covered by spray and water that might be accurate to real-world physics but not necessarily aesthetically pleasing.

For lighting, the glowing water hair became a key source of light, not only illuminating Nerissa's skin but lighting up the surrounding area, much like Ruby does when she's in the kraken's activated form. The light is brightest at the scalp, illuminating the churning white spray; it then turns into a blue cyan color as it gets closer to the ocean and connects with the water in a continuous stream, says Wu.

"Water is interesting because there is that self-illuminating property of the material," she adds. Normally, lighting would create the glow-like appearance, but in this case FX set up the material properties with an internal glow to create the path of illumination. The FX team provided lighting with controls to allow the artists to determine how far up or down the brightness would travel through the hair.

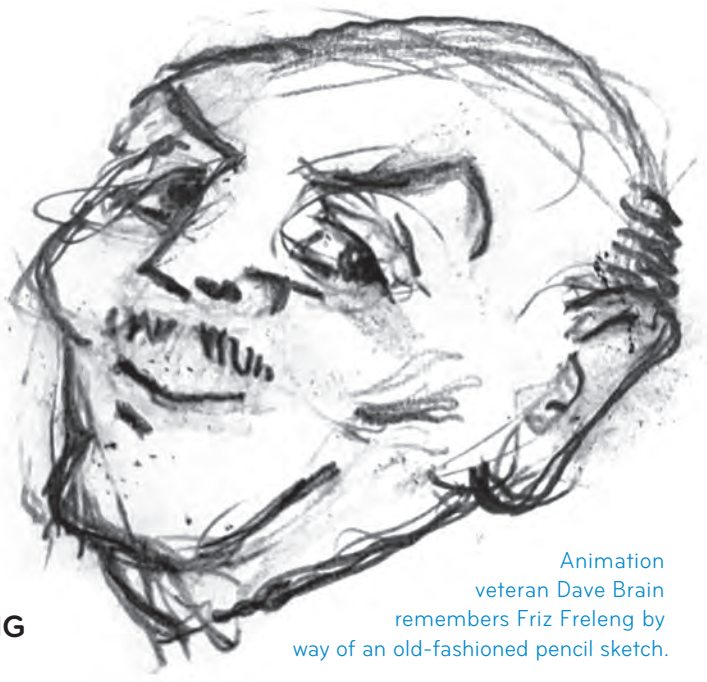
This modular approach throughout the film turned kraken-sized challenges into manageable solutions that embodied the vision of the filmmakers. Adds DeMicco: "I'm sure [the FX artists] were worried, but I wasn't worried because I think they're geniuses and they can do anything. It's like wizardry."

THIS PAGE: *Original concept art of Nerissa by Pierre-Olivier Vincent;* **OPPOSITE (TOP):** *Storyboard of Nerissa by Story Artist Darren Webb.* **(BOTTOM, FROM LEFT):** *Modeled hair; Local and World spray; Final render of Nerissa.*


Hair Tubes
+ Procedural Ridges
+ Ocean Displacement

LIVE AND LEARN

ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF DEPATIE-FRELENG ENTERPRISES (1963-1981), RETIRED TAG MEMBER DAVE BRAIN REMINISCENCES ABOUT MEETING CO-FOUNDER FRIZ FRELENG OVER THE YEARS.



Animation veteran Dave Brain remembers Friz Freleng by way of an old-fashioned pencil sketch.

When Warner Bros. shut down its animation studio—where Friz Freleng had been the Director of several Oscar-winning shorts—Friz and Dave DePatie started their own studio, producing *Pink Panther* and *The Ant and the Aardvark* theatrical short cartoons. They landed an order for two Saturday morning TV series and were staffing up.

I think word was being passed along in what was at that time a very small and tight-knit industry because I got hired at DePatie-Freleng on the afternoon of the day I was laid off from Disney. Upon first reporting to work, I was introduced to Dave. It was a quick handshake and a "go get'em."

Then, three weeks later, in the men's lavatory, I was standing at a wall urinal mid-elimination when Friz stepped up to the next one. I heard his gruff voice say, "Keep it up."

"I'm pretty sure I'm peeing into the drain," I said.

"No," he said. "Keep up the good work."

I hadn't met Friz yet, but we signed our names on the scenes we worked on. I guess he knew who all the new guys were. Funny way to meet a legend.

I hopped from various studios, and about six or seven years later I was a Freelance Animator picking up work from Hanna-Barbera. My director invited me to come along with him to an "old-timers" lunch at a nearby restaurant. Friz was one of the old-timers, and I was seated next to him. Even though I'd worked for him before, this was my first chance to have a one-on-one, and I asked how he got started in animation.

He told me he was a single-frame camera operator at a title company in Kansas City, Missouri. His job was to retitle all the dialogue in the silent films. "A lot of the names for things were different in those days in different parts of the country," he explained. "The colloquialisms wouldn't work."

I remembered that Walt Disney had worked for a title company in Kansas City, and when I mentioned this, Friz said, "I took over for Walt when he and his brother started their own company." I thought that's how you get your breaks, being ready when a job opens up.

It took another six or seven years for me to finally see Friz in action. Director/Designer Corny Cole was giving me my last animation handout on a *Flip Wilson Special* he was doing for DePatie-Freleng. Friz came by and asked if I wanted to pick up on another show he was directing, *The Bear Who Slept Through Christmas*. I jumped at the chance. I picked up a dozen scenes, rough animated them from the layout drawings, and turned them in for camera pencil tests. A few days later I was called to the studio to review my work with Friz. The editor showed me the scenes cut together, and I wondered what Friz would think when he arrived.

Friz walked in and we ran the footage again. He didn't even have to look at it a few times. He was a guy who'd been in the trenches a lot of years and just knew what to do. He thought for a minute and said, "There's too much right and left in this section. Hold on the opening scene another second after the little bear leaves, then cut to the big hole trap as the bear steps to a stop. Let him lean over and say two or three words before you cut to the down shot of the big bear listening. Go to an up shot of the little bear looking down past camera for the pizza line, then open up three feet so he can turn away to off camera then come back for '... and don't forget the anchovies!'"

A few minutes with the old pro and I'd seen him punch up the gag and cut the animation costs by a third. What a lesson that was. It was a far cry from that first meeting with Friz in a men's lavatory decades ago.

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