

WINTER 2023

ISSUE NO. 24

KEYFRAME

THE ANIMATION GUILD
QUARTERLY



THE
WISH
MAKERS

**“AN EXCITING THRILL RIDE
MOST BELOVED REALMS**



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UNIVERSAL

THROUGH SOME OF THE IN THE GAMING WORLD.”

Lex Briscuso, THE WRAP

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
In All Categories Including

**BEST ANIMATED
FEATURE**

Produced By

**CHRIS MELEDANDRI p.g.a.
SHIGERU MIYAMOTO**

Directed By

**AARON HORVATH
MICHAEL JELENIC**

**BEST ORIGINAL
SCORE**

BRIAN TYLER

**BEST VISUAL
EFFECTS**

Nintendo + ILLUMINATION

**THE SUPER
MARIO
BROS.
MOVIE**



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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
IN ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING *BEST ANIMATED FEATURE*

“THE ANIMATION SOARS”

KRISTEN PAGE-KIRBY, THE WASHINGTON POST

“EVERY FRAME CRACKLES OVER WITH ENERGY AND COLOR;
IN THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY, IT ACTUALLY LOOKS TEENAGE.”

ROBBIE COLLIN, THE TELEGRAPH





For Your Consideration
In All Categories Including

BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

Produced By Chris Meledandri p.g.a.
Directed By Benjamin Renner

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE
John Powell

 ILLUMINATION PRESENTS

MIGRATION

ILLUMINATION
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ON THE COVER

To celebrate TAG's contributions to Walt Disney Animation over the decades, Tim Sullens photographed (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP CENTER) Dale Mayeda, Jane Baer, Jin Kim, Fawn Veerasunthorn, and Mark Henn.



UNIFYING OUR WISHES FOR A STRONGER ANIMATION INDUSTRY



IF I WERE GRANTED A SINGLE WISH, I'D USE IT TO MEND THE BROKEN PIECES OF OUR WORLD, WHERE CLIMATE CATASTROPHES, NEW DISEASES, CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE, WEALTH INEQUALITY, GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS, AND THREATS TO DEMOCRACY LOOM

OVER US LIKE OMINOUS CLOUDS. WHILE I WISH I POSSESSED THE MAGIC TO SOLVE ALL THESE PROBLEMS, I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS OUR THOUGHTS TODAY ON A MORE SPECIFIC WISH—ONE THAT CONCERNS OUR BELOVED ANIMATION INDUSTRY.

In a time where so much seems uncertain, one constant remains—the volatility in the entertainment industry. My wish for the future of animation is that production orders rise to a sustainable rate, providing steady work for all talented artists and dedicated crews. We aspire to contribute to an industry where we can lead stable, middle-class lives, free from the anxiety of constantly hunting for our next gig. We envision a future where technological changes are in the hands of the artists, granting us the freedom to experiment creatively, while maintaining a manageable workload that allows us to spend quality time with our loved ones. We dream of a world where we all can afford to own property and build a nest egg for a comfortable retirement.

As we know, wishes alone cannot make these dreams a reality. It takes concerted effort and unwavering commitment from each and every one of us. Our Union, our bond to each other, is the conduit to transform our wishes into reality. Together, we are a powerful force, capable of bringing positive change to our industry and securing better working conditions for everyone.

Soon, we are approaching our next round of negotiations, a critical moment that can shape the course of our industry. I encourage each of you to remain unified as we navigate the challenging waters ahead. Our strength lies in our collective voice, and by working together, we can make our wish for a more stable, prosperous animation industry come true.

Let's continue to support one another, share our experiences, and voice our concerns, as we strive to create an industry where artists and crews are not just cogs in a machine, but integral contributors to the magic of animation. Let's work together to make our dream a reality, where every artist and crew member can enjoy a fulfilling career, a balanced life, and a secure future.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to our industry. Let's keep the flame of our wishes alive, for together we can achieve great things. Here's to a bright and prosperous future for animation!

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

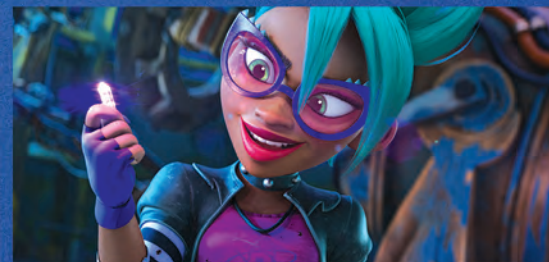
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"AN ACTION-PACKED ADVENTURE FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY!"
DAVE MORALES, **FOX TV**



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

BEST ANIMATED FILM



"The best 'Trol"



**Best
Animated
Feature**

Produced by **GINA SHAY** p.g.a.

Directed by **WALT DOHRN**

Is' movie yet?"

Film



DREAMWORKS

Trolls

Band Together

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KEYFRAME

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the
animation
guild

Representing animation artists,
writers and technicians since 1952.



WISHFUL THINKING



WHEN I WAS A CHILD, DID I DREAM ABOUT WORKING ANIMATION-ADJACENT? TO BE HONEST, NO. MY OWN ARTISTIC SKILLS CAN BE DESCRIBED AS ENTHUSIASTIC, AT BEST. BUT CREATIVITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO ME. NOT ONLY LIVING A CREATIVE LIFE, BUT ALSO BEING SURROUNDED BY CREATIVE PEOPLE. IN THAT SENSE, BEING

MANAGING EDITOR OF *KEYFRAME* IS A WISH COME TRUE, JUST AS HAVING A CAREER IN ANIMATION FULFILLS THE WISHES OF OUR TAG MEMBERS.

As Walt Disney Animation Studios turns 100 this year, its latest feature film, *Wish*, explores the importance of making wishes (p. 28). We also interview five TAG members whose collective careers span seven decades at the studio (p. 32). Each of them says that working for Disney is a wish achieved, beginning with Jane Baer, who started out with “the girls in the bullpen” in the late 1950s on *Sleeping Beauty*. Building a successful career as a woman was a long, hard journey, and when she met Fawn Veerasunthorn during our cover shoot, she saw the manifestation of her own wishes in the younger woman, who is one of the Directors on *Wish*. “We’re getting there,” says Baer, delighted. “It’s encouraging.”

Wishes also drive two of this winter’s feature films (p. 38). In *Leo*, a grumpy lizard wishes for a life outside his terrarium, and in *Trolls Band Together*, brothers wish to get their boy band back together. It wasn’t until I began writing this Editor’s Note that I realized how much wishes play into all aspects of our members’ lives, from Mercedes Valle who’s been able to incorporate her Puerto Rican heritage into her animation work (p. 16) to Kristin Donner who’s found a way to combine her passions for animation and archaeology (p. 25). We’re also featuring our Fifth Annual Holiday Gift Guide (p. 42), so if your wish is to find the perfect gifts for friends and family, look no further!

As we enter 2024, my wish is that you all keep doing what you do best: use your talents and imagination to keep making the wishes for escape and entertainment come true for people around the world.

Happy Holidays!

Kim Fay

Kim Fay
editor@tag839.org

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WHITNEY FRIEDLANDER
 (“Digging Deep”)

is an entertainment journalist who lives in Los Angeles with her husband, son, daughter, and infamously ornery cat. A former staff writer at *Los Angeles Times* and *Variety*, she has also written for *Esquire*, *Marie Claire*, and *The Washington Post*, and currently contributes to CNN.



Freelance writer and author **KAREN BRINER**
 (“Season’s Screenings”)

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*.



AMANDA DE LANY
 (“Folklore Fantasy”)

is from the San Francisco Bay Area, where she learned a love for all things Film & TV. She now lives in Los Angeles with her cat, and she works as an Administrative Assistant for The Animation Guild. She debuted her first short film, *Because I Love you*, in 2016.



L.A.-based photographer **TIM SULLENS** has one

wife, two daughters, and six cameras. Over the years, he has captured images of musicians and performers, political rallies and weddings. In this issue, he snapped “The Wish Makers.”

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
IN ALL CATEGORIES INCLUDING
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

Disney
WISH





FOLKLORE FANTASY



Graduating from Sheridan College in 2019, Keneth Leoncito joined Netflix as a Set Designer/Illustrator, working on *Wendell & Wild*. But he was

also interested in character design, and he was accepted into Disney's training program. Not only did he learn a new craft at Disney, but he also met colleagues who shared his passion for table-top role-playing games (TTRPGs) like *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Fabula is a mixed-media artwork created for Leoncito's own "home-brewed" TTRPG campaign; a campaign is "a set of linked adventures that make up one long story," he says. It serves as a tapestry-like homage to fantasy Japanese role-playing games

like *The Legend of Zelda*, *Final Fantasy*, and *Fabula Ultima*, as well as his love of folklore.

Leoncito describes the piece as a combination of styles, incorporating his own twist on traditional fairy tales. He notes legendary Disney artist Kay Nielsen as his influence for delicate linework, and for their costume sensibility, Yoshitaka Amano's Art Nouveau styling and Leon Bakst's designs for the Ballets Russes. The result is the depiction of various characters resting between the pages of an open book, mourning the death of Snow White. The Blue Fairy—reimagined as a goddess—leads the characters and the story along the role-playing campaign.

To create *Fabula*, Leoncito used text from the pages of a Hans Christian Andersen book, written in the early 1900s, and

hand-drew the kind of mythical castle you might see in a Disney movie. Leoncito carefully layered his own penciled linework shaping the open novel, and the descriptive line etchings and blooming washes of color give the piece its folklore style. After scanning the various layers, finishing touches include digitally painting the image and adding final line details using Procreate.

Leoncito's art can be found at www.kenesu.com.

—Amanda De Lany

ARTIST: Keneth Leoncito

TITLE: *Fabula*

MEDIUM: Procreate, Photoshop, and graphite

SIZE: 16" x 31"

COURSE CORRECTION

FORMER LAWYER MERCEDES VALLE HAS FOUND HER CALLING AS AN ANIMATION WRITER—CASE CLOSED!

By her own admission, writer and self-described “recovering lawyer” Mercedes Valle never had a plan B. From a very early age, as she mapped out her future—with the encouragement of her family—she didn’t seem to need one.

How’s this for a super-charged resume: master’s degree in Korean Studies, third-degree black belt Taekwondo practitioner, Ivy League education at Princeton, a law degree, and a job as a litigation attorney with a prestigious legal firm in New York City.

“My Puerto Rican grandfather was like, ‘You’re going to be the first African American president of the United States,’” recalls Valle. “‘Not the first Puerto Rican president, too? Okay, Grandpa.’ The bar was very high for me expectation-wise. I think inside part of me always wanted to be a writer, but I felt I couldn’t do that because of what was already set in my life.”

It didn’t take long for Valle to realize that the legal profession was making her miserable. Two years into her law job she left the firm and took a summer intensive at New York University’s dramatic writing program. The *Family Guy* script she wrote had her classmates laughing out loud and prompted Valle’s sitcom writing professor to proclaim what Valle was starting to realize.

“She said, ‘You were meant to do this,’” Valle says. “She had worked on Wall Street before she became a writer, so she knew what it was like to go from one kind of grind to another. I took those words to heart.”

Valle’s first big break came via a writing group she joined with alumni of the National Hispanic Media Coalition’s TV writers. One of the group members, a Story Editor on the Disney Channel’s *Elena of Avalor*, liked Valle’s work and recommended her for the series. Subsequent credits include *Action Pack* and *Polly Pocket*.

As she considers her professional journey to this point, Valle notes that her master’s in Korean Studies has not helped her much in the world of animation. Ditto, her JD. Animated series targeting kids don’t make use of a lot of legal terminology.

Then again, a case can be made that all life experience is potentially relevant. After all, when reviewing her application, *Elena of Avalor* Showrunner Craig Gerber noted the transition that Valle was attempting to make and remarked that his wife was an attorney.

“*Elena of Avalor* is about a teenage princess who has magic. She wasn’t going to court every episode,” Valle says. “But in a way, [my experience] did kind of

help. Connections [are] so important in this business. Usually, it doesn’t happen as much for the people of color because of who’s in power. I was very lucky.”

She points with pride to another series she has written for: Netflix’s *Mech Cadets*, about a group of teens that bond with giant robots called Robo Mechs to keep the planet safe from alien invasion. The series was being made in 2020 as Hollywood was processing the murder of George Floyd. Valle, who had had several meetings to “fix the mistakes” other writers had made in representations of people of color, was pleased to land on *Mech Cadets*, a series in which she got to make one of the characters Puerto Rican to reflect part of her heritage and where another character is a congenital amputee voiced by an actor who has the same limb difference.

“You don’t realize how much of a blessing it is to have a writer in charge who knows exactly what they want,” Valle says of *Mech Cadets*’ Executive Producer Aaron Lam. “We were writing up age-wise. That’s why my friends who are not children enjoy the show. It has layers, it’s complex, and there’s a cliffhanger at the end. I’m really proud of the diversity, too.”

Diversity and inclusion are a significant part of Valle’s life both at work and beyond. She is a dual TAG and WGA

BELOW, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Table read for Valle's first *Elena of Avalor* episode to air, "Prince Too Charming"; Valle's graduation from Rutgers Law School–Newark with her mother who passed away earlier this year; Think Tank for Inclusion & Equity (TTIE) special picket at Disney with Tawal Panyacosit Jr. and Brusta Brown; TAG POC Writers Subcommittee mixer; Disney name badge Valle received after starting on *Elena of Avalor*; Characters from *Mech Cadets*; Character Amara from *Elena of Avalor* is based on Valle's niece, Amara; **(CENTER)** Mini *Mech Cadets* reunion on the Disney picket lines with Head Writer/EP Aaron Lam and writer David Shayne.

member, and she was active in the Writers Guild of America's Committee of Black Writers, LGBTQ+ Writers Committee, and Latinx Writers Committee. She is on the steering committee for the Think Tank for Inclusion & Equity, and she also founded and chairs TAG's POC Writers Subcommittee with co-chair Nick "Rocket" Rodriguez.

The goal of the committee is for members to help each other with information, advice, and resources so that hopefully they can all become story editors and showrunners. Valle says the group also strives to "help bring up other people who look like us or maybe don't look like us but who have been on the sidelines for a long time."

It's an important part of Valle's life and career as a writer not to be "the only one," she says. "Part of the legacy I want to leave is that I want people who haven't seen themselves as the hero onscreen to be able to see themselves now. More of us need to have a voice and have a say."

– Evan Henerson



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

"★★★★★
BRILLIANT AND UPROARIOUS."

The Telegraph

"Beneath all of the visual razzle-dazzle and quick-firing gags, it's fundamentally a well-executed coming-of-age narrative, in which a youngster is compelled to spread their wings, and parents must learn to let them fly."

SCREEN DAILY



★ AARDMAN
CHICKEN RUN
DAWN OF THE NUGGET



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KEEPING IT TOGETHER

AS MORE ANIMATION PRODUCTION CREWS JOIN TAG, THE ROLES THAT THE GUILD REPRESENTS GROW. HERE, THREE NEW MEMBERS SHARE WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A PRODUCTION COORDINATOR ON AN ANIMATED SERIES.



ABIGAIL BOKUN BABY SHARK'S BIG SHOW!, NICKELODEON

When Abigail Bokun was in the fifth grade, she told her teachers it was her dream to work at Pixar Animation Studios. She eventually earned a BFA in Animation from DePaul University and originally sought storyboard work but found it difficult to get her foot in the door. She feels fortunate to be in production, where she has grown her career from Production Assistant to Production Coordinator.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB?

I consider my job the glue that holds

the different departments together. Production is not only interfacing with all the artists, writers, directors, and executive producers, but we are also expected to handle myriad day-to-day tasks that ensure everyone else is able to do their job efficiently. I am expected to attend any meetings that have to do with storyboards, director or lead check-ins, network reviews, and so much more. When I'm not helping run those, I [break] down episodes, track asset assignment, send files, and am at the ready for any issues that may come up.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF YOUR JOB?

With so many moving pieces, it can be overwhelming to make a choice about which task I should do when. There are times when I know I should be working on the lead sheet (logging every single asset that shows up in every single scene), but there's also an animatic review at 4 p.m. and we still don't have the animatic itself. Knowing what to prioritize when is a learned skill. Boundaries are also important. Because animation production unionizing is new, production desperately needs standardized job descriptions and protections to avoid job creep.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS ABOUT BEING A PRODUCTION COORDINATOR?

My love for animation is still so strong, and being in production allows me to watch an episode get made from start to finish. I still get that excited zing in my chest when watching a new animatic or seeing a cute design for the first time. Art is beautiful, and it is a privilege to be the one helping it get made.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ASPIRING PRODUCTION COORDINATORS?

Whether production is a stepping stone in your path to a creative position, or a career you wish to pursue all the way up the ladder, I truly believe that production can foster good relationships between every person on the project. Be kind and learn about your peers' schedules and their struggles. And tell them about *your* struggles and aspirations! The more we all learn about each other in this wonderful, stressful, beautiful world of animation, the more we can stand up for one another when times are tough.



CLAIRE ANNE BRAND BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD, TITMOUSE

Claire Anne Brand got her start in animation production in short-form web content with Hallmark Cards in their “e-card” department. She felt particularly drawn to the animation pipeline, which led to her first TV job with Titmouse. While there she’s worked as a Post-Production and Storyboard Coordinator, most recently on the *Beavis and Butt-Head* series and *Beavis and Butt-Head Do the Universe* movie.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB?

I would describe Production Coordinators as the connective tissue between departments. Coordinators facilitate handoffs between different stages of the production pipeline and ensure that everyone within their own department has the materials they need, while preparing assets for the next stage of animation. Coordinators also act as an intermediary between artists and their day-to-day tasks, and the larger timeline dictated by the producers.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF YOUR JOB?

I find one of the biggest challenges to be tracking various stages of the production process [all] at once. In television animation we’re usually working on multiple episodes at the same time, all of which are at different phases of completion. If you’re not tracking each episode carefully, it can be difficult to distinguish what each department needs and what stage they are moving to next. Another challenge is considering the multitude of deliverables each vendor or network needs from you. It’s important to create processes that consider multiple asks so that these assets can be delivered in a timely manner.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS ABOUT BEING A PRODUCTION COORDINATOR?

While it can be challenging to track multiple stages of production, it’s very rewarding when everything comes together, and you see an idea go from words on a page to a fully animated story. It’s great to be in close proximity to such talented artists—I feel like I get to sit in on private art showings whenever we have design reviews.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ASPIRING PRODUCTION COORDINATORS?

Be intentional about getting to know members of the crew and the departments you work with. Everyone has a different style of working. While there’s usually a standard set of practices for how each stage of production should run, knowing how these can be adjusted to better fit your crew members will make the entire process flow more organically. And it’s a cliché phrase, but “expect the unexpected” could not apply better to working in production. Whether it be deadlines, deliverables, scripts, or designs, things in animation change all the time. As long as you’re flexible and ready to learn, you’ll do great!



ERIKA SMITH GRIMSBURG, BENTO BOX

Since working at Cartoon Network was one of Erika Smith’s dreams growing up, she calls her first job as a Production Assistant on *Steven Universe Future* “a pretty dreamy start to my career!” She went on to work on *Bless the Harts* and *LEGO DREAMXzz*, and she is now at Bento Box as a Production Coordinator on *Grimsburg*.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB?

It’s hard to describe what a “Production Coordinator” does because it can mean so many things. Production Coordinators can be Storyboard Coordinators, Design Coordinators, Post Coordinators, and a million other variations of the word “coordinator.” I’ve done a little bit of everything, but right now I’m a Record Coordinator. I manage the voice records on our show. That means scheduling actors, prepping materials, tracking dialogue, doing paperwork, and more.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF YOUR JOB?

Learning to prioritize is one of the most difficult parts of being a Production Coordinator. When you’re in the heat of production, there are a million things to do, and everything feels like the most important thing. You need to look at your tasks from a bird’s eye view [to] see what is actually the most important thing. Sometimes the most important thing for you will not be the most important thing for someone else, so you need to be mindful of your coworkers while also respecting your own needs.

WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS ABOUT BEING A PRODUCTION COORDINATOR?

There is a lot of joy in working in animation. You’re not working somewhere like a DMV where no one wants to be there. You are surrounded by creative people who love what they do. Everyone is trying to make the best show they possibly can. When you’re done, you get to share that joy with the world.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ASPIRING PRODUCTION COORDINATORS?

This is a piece of advice that one of my Production Coordinators gave me when I was a Production Assistant: “Remember it’s just a cartoon.” Production coordinating is a high-stress, high-pressure job, and it’s very easy to feel like the world is ending if something doesn’t go as planned. The world will not end. Learn what’s in your control and [what’s] not, and try not to let others’ stress get to you. At the end of the day, we’re making cartoons, and that’s pretty cool!

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST ANIMATED SHORT

DORA AND THE FANTASTICAL CREATURES

*"The world of Dora will come
alive like never before."*

-Nerdtropolis



nickelodeon
movies

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AUDIENCES
All Ages Admitted

LABOR SCHOOL

AFL-CIO.

WHAT DO THESE LETTERS MEAN? READ ON FOR THE KEY TO UNLOCKING THE CODE TO THIS UNION ACRONYM.



WHAT IS IT?

The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is a federation of 60 distinct labor unions. This includes IATSE, the national union that represents entertainment industry workers in the U.S. and Canada. IATSE is the parent union of The Animation Guild, Local 839.

WHEN DID IT ORIGINATE?

Back in 1886, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was founded to organize skilled workers. As disagreements ensued over whether union organization should be based on skill (craft) or industry (workplace), the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) came into being in 1935. Initially, the relationship between the AFL and CIO was contentious because of these conflicting schools of thought. But when the Taft-Hartley Act was passed in 1947, curbing some union rights, the organizations found it in their best interests to combine forces, and they merged in 1955. Today the AFL-CIO represents 12.5 million working people.

WHY DOES IT MATTER TO YOU?

The AFL-CIO is governed by democratically elected officers from its federation of unions, which means its activities represent the interests of all union members under its umbrella including TAG members. Among the AFL-CIO's operations are organizing efforts, educational campaigns on behalf of the labor movement, and support of legislation beneficial to labor, including investing tax dollars in public works projects that provide good jobs. With a goal to "give working people a collective voice to address workplace injustices without the fear of retaliation," it strives to ensure that all working people are treated fairly, with safe jobs, equal opportunities, and dignity.

Learn more about the AFL-CIO at <https://aflcio.org>.



MEET YOUR
TAG STAFF
ALLISON SMARTT
FIELD ORGANIZER

TAG GOES NATIONAL



OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS, TAG HAS ORGANIZED ANIMATION STUDIOS AT AN UNPRECEDENTED RATE IN ITS HISTORY AS A UNION.

To learn more about organizing an animation studio, contact organize@tag839.org or visit animationguild.org/start-a-union.

We reached significant milestones by organizing the first animation studio (Titmouse New York) outside Los Angeles County since our founding in 1952 and by announcing organizing victories in Texas (Powerhouse) and Puerto Rico (Gladius). When TAG arrived at this summer's IATSE General Executive Board meeting, we had plenty to report.

The response led to another unprecedented, history-making moment. In a show of support for TAG's ongoing organizing and expansion, the IATSE General Executive Board voted unanimously to grant national jurisdiction over animation to The Animation Guild, Local 839.

What does this mean? TAG is one of more than 360 entertainment-related Local Unions operating under the IATSE's national umbrella, and IATSE has designated TAG as the sole IATSE Local authorized to represent animation workers in the United States. It calls on the other Locals to support our efforts, and when they see animation work in their area, they are asked to reach out to TAG to organize and represent that work.

This move does not mean that all animation studios across the United States will now automatically adhere to TAG's Collective Bargaining Agreement. It does make the path easier to organizing those studios and creating national standards for fair pay, benefits, and working conditions in the future.

WHAT ARE YOUR JOB DUTIES?

Basically, I help animation industry workers who want a collective voice in their workplace form a union and join TAG! I frequently meet with individuals interested in organizing their workplace and with small groups of workers who are organizing their workplace (aka Organizing Committees). I provide training for these worker-organizers to prepare them for success. For groups that have successfully organized and are "recognized" (meaning TAG is their legally certified collective bargaining representative), I provide training on the negotiation process, help the Negotiations Committee identify negotiation priorities, and attend all bargaining sessions with employers.

A broader yet central responsibility is to understand the group that is organizing their workplace—their dynamics, concerns, and challenges—and to help brainstorm, facilitate, and support them to succeed during tough campaigns. In all industries, from Starbucks to Disney Feature Animation, there is often pushback from the employers who want to deny workers' the voice and power they seek on the job through organizing. With the leadership of TAG's Business Representative Steve Kaplan, and significant support from TAG staff, shop stewards, the Executive Board, and counsel, I help these workers examine and execute ways to amplify their collective voices.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR JOB?

Witnessing workers' bravery and solidarity. Seeing the real-life impacts of a Collective Bargaining Agreement on peoples' lives: increased wages and health and retirement benefits, protections from unfair discipline, and people banding together to stand up for dignity and respect at work.

WHAT'S A FUN FACT ABOUT YOU?

I am a sound engineer, designer, and theater technician, and for about four years, I founded and ran a company that produced performances rooted in social justice like *MOM BABY GOD* and *Mixed-Race Mixtape*.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE

ADAM SANDLER
IS **LEGO**



DIGGING DEEP

KRISTIN DONNER EXPLORES HER PASSION FOR HUMAN EXPERIENCE AT THE CROSSROADS OF ANIMATION AND ARCHAEOLOGY.



Animation's power is that its artists transform the tangible out of the intangible. Animators use imagination, research, and their

own hands to create fully developed worlds and creatures.

Archaeology's strength is almost the opposite. Historians and scientists look at the tangible—pots, bones, dwellings—and use their imagination, research, and hands to document the intangible: memories of the worlds and creatures that came before us.

Kristin Donner has found a way to do both.

When not working on animated programs like *The Fairly OddParents*, *The Fungies!*, and *Harley Quinn*, the Color Supervisor, Color Designer, and Background Painter has been collaborating with Laura Harrison, an archaeologist and Director of Access 3D Lab at the University of South Florida, on their Project CLAY: Creative Learning Through Archaeology.

The duo met in 2014 at an archaeology dig in Turkey. Donner, who says she has always had an interest in what she describes as “material culture” and how we use items throughout time, had started working within the archeology communities during hiatuses for a change of scenery from her desk job—and also to get some sun. She and Harrison came up with the idea of Project CLAY and shaped it into a way to teach kids about the Early Bronze Age through hands-on activities that integrate art and digital technologies.

In addition to working with 3D printing made at Harrison's lab that shows kids replicas of pottery from that time, Project CLAY includes a comic called *Mix, Mold, Fire!*. It stars Abby the Apprentice, a young potter designed by Donner. Abby has a rush order on a special jug. As she races to complete her task, readers learn how pottery was made circa 2200-2150 B.C.E.

“Both mediums provide an opportunity to understand human stories or human experience,” Donner says of animation and archaeology.

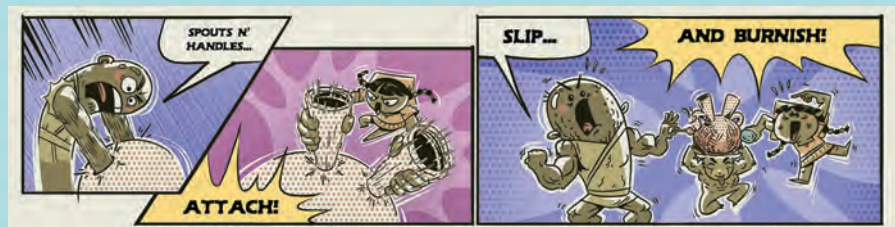
The dig in Turkey was a lucky opportunity for Donner because the pottery studios and workstations were fairly intact. She saw the pottery tools being excavated, and she says:

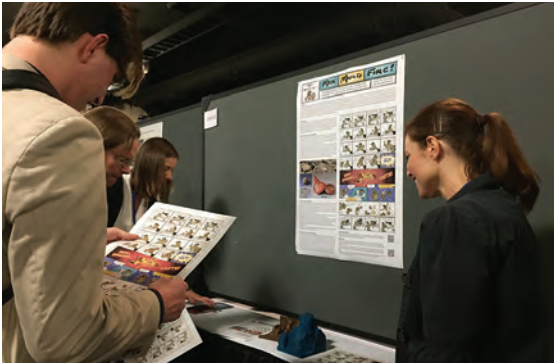
“I made this connection like oh, this is the pottery production line. And I'm working in an animation production pipeline.”

“There's historical evidence of the process of crafting being in a community environment or a team endeavor,” she adds.

Donner's research into how to portray those who lived in the Early Bronze Age included everything from what people wore to the gender roles of this community. These also parallel her work in animation.

“I'm really interested in character costuming,” she says. “A really fun part, in terms of developing the characters for the comic, was that I did a lot of research on fabrics that were used in the Bronze Age—what clothing styles maybe would have been typical and what types of dye would have been used to color them. I tried to be thoughtful on the historic feasibility of how the characters were portrayed.”





OPPOSITE PAGE: Segments from Donner's comic, *Mix, Mold, Fire!* THIS PAGE, FROM TOP LEFT: Students roll 3D printed cylinder seals over clay to make impressions; Donner at the Seyitömer Höyük Rescue Excavation in Turkey; Students shape clay into bowls and cups; Archaeologists study Project CLAY handouts at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology.

She notes that the site director in Turkey interpreted the site as being gender inclusive due to some of the human remains found. It's also thought that some of the communal workspaces probably included family workspaces.

"This helped us feel like our choice of having a young protagonist could work [because it was] grounded in the scientific findings on the site," Donner says. "But it was also really important to us that it be a strong female voice as the main character, in terms of gender representation and inclusivity."

Donner's experiences with archaeology have infiltrated her own creative process in animation. She's currently developing an unannounced animation project at Nickelodeon Animation Studios and says that as she and her partner, Kyle Neswald,

created "our world as it exists in the moment of the story, we started thinking about, 'How did it get this way? How did this world evolve?' We dug deeper and deeper and deeper and, before we knew it, we'd written a history."

Project CLAY has become a success, partnering with Harrison's lab in Tampa to create Activity Boxes for Florida classrooms. The educational tool meets the requirements of Florida's state teaching curriculum for sixth graders. Harrison and Donner also co-authored a chapter of the 2022 academic research book, *Comics and Archaeology*.

Donner, who teaches in the Experimental Animation program at Laguna College of Art and Design, considers Project CLAY to be her "side hustle" and "a passion project." But she admits that it

has shifted her focus a little bit when it comes to what kind of animation projects she chooses to explore.

While she was already thinking about educational components and responsible storytelling before she met Harrison, she says: "Any time I explore another culture, whether it's just traveling and meeting people from another culture, or in this case, looking back in time at the evolution of a culture and how that culture is expressed through its artifacts, it makes me really consider the experience of the 'other' and try to reach outside myself and understand someone else's life experience."

Learn more about Project CLAY at www.usf.edu/arts-sciences/labs/access3d/lab-projects/projectclay.aspx.

– Whitney Friedlander

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE



THE ANIMATED FEATURE OF THE YEAR.

Bold and thoughtful work with the earmarks of a classic.
Nimona makes a cry for acceptance that has
mythic resonance.”

San Francisco Chronicle

“IRREVERENT AND DEEPLY SINCERE.

A revisionist fairy tale that forges its own path
visually and narratively TO BEAUTIFUL EFFECT.”

EMPIRE

“IT’S A VIVID CREATURE
ALL ITS OWN.”

The New York Times

“A BREAKTHROUGH.

It pushes 2D stylization into 3D with a
UNIQUELY ILLUSTRATED LOOK.”

IndieWire

NIMONA



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TO EXPLORE THE
ART OF BOOK!



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WISHING ON STARS

Using inventive technology, *Wish* is an original fairy tale that fully embraces the Walt Disney legacy.

By Kim Fay

Wish images courtesy of Walt Disney Animation Studios.

Since the start of animation as an industry, one of its abiding missions has been to perfect drawings in motion. With CG, this goal expanded to make animation that feels as realistic as possible. But to honor its 100-year anniversary, Walt Disney Animation Studios shifted into reverse.

Looking back to some of the studio's earliest films for inspiration, the comedy-musical *Wish* is the story of 17-year-old Asha, an idealistic commoner who dreams of being the apprentice to King Magnifico, the ruler of the land of Rosas. King Magnifico has the power to grant the wishes of his subjects, but when Asha discovers what he actually does with these wishes, she makes her own wish so strong it invokes a cosmic force in the form of a lively, powerful star. Together with a pajama-clad goat named Valentino, Asha and Star set off to save the wishes of Rosas.

While the story is original and Asha is a heroine rather than a princess, *Wish* resides comfortably in the spirit of Disney's classic fairy tales. "Gustaf Tenggren and Kay Nielsen are two of the many [early] Disney animation artists who inspired our look," says Avneet Kaur, Head of Characters and Technical Animation. Born in Sweden, Tenggren designed the evocative backgrounds including the cottage and deep woods for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and he is perhaps best known for the brooding atmosphere of *Pinocchio*, introducing the illusion of depth he had used in his illustrations for books like *Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales*. Hailing from Denmark, Nielsen illustrated classic fairy tales in a dark, dramatic style that blended influences from Art Nouveau to Japanese woodcuts; during his short but



influential time at Disney, he designed the memorable "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence in *Fantasia*.

While there was no intention of stepping away from CG technology, according to Production Designer David Womersley, there was a desire to capture the artistic atmosphere of the old films. The filmmakers did more than study who crafted them, though. They thought, "What if we look even further back?" says Womersley. "Walt Disney, when he was a little kid, and these [animators] when they were young, they would be looking at these beautiful illustrated books from the turn of the century. There were people like Charles

and William Heath Robinson, John Bauer, Edmund Dulac, William Russell Flint—these amazing watercolor illustrators that the people who did *Pinocchio* and *Snow White* would have been [able to] go to."

THIS PAGE: Visual development art for *Wish* was inspired by early Disney artists such as Eyvind Earle, who was responsible for the atmospheric colors and styling of *Sleeping Beauty*. **ABOVE:** Watercolor technique was used to create a warm, inviting atmosphere inside Asha's family cottage.



GOING THE DISTANCE

Animating rich watercolor illustrations to create a living storybook became the driving aesthetic vision for *Wish*. But they couldn't just layer a textured watercolor pattern over the top of the scenes. This would cause what is known as the shower door effect. "What we had to do was come up with a technique that had never been done before," says Kyle Odermatt, Visual Effects Supervisor.

A significant component of the look of a watercolor painting is the textural quality provided by the tooth of the paper. "If you're painting an object in the distance on watercolor paper, that texture created by the tooth of the paper will appear very large relative to the object," Odermatt says. "For example, a house in the distance is drawn much smaller than a similar-sized house up close to maintain perspective. If you were to bake the paper texture into the closer, larger house and shrink it to represent a more distant house, the texture would feel too small and make them not seem like part of the same watercolor painting."

To recreate this effect, Odermatt says, "You adjust this textural pattern across everything in the scene on any given frame" so that it appears that the watercolor paper texture is always the same size irrespective of distance, maintaining the illusion that

the artwork is all of one piece. With the technology that was created to address this issue, "as something moves away, the texture actually gets larger on it, and if something gets closer, the texture gets smaller, so that everything on the screen has a consistent textured size overlay to it. That's the dynamic component of the system. It has to change over time if the camera moves or if an object or character moves onscreen."

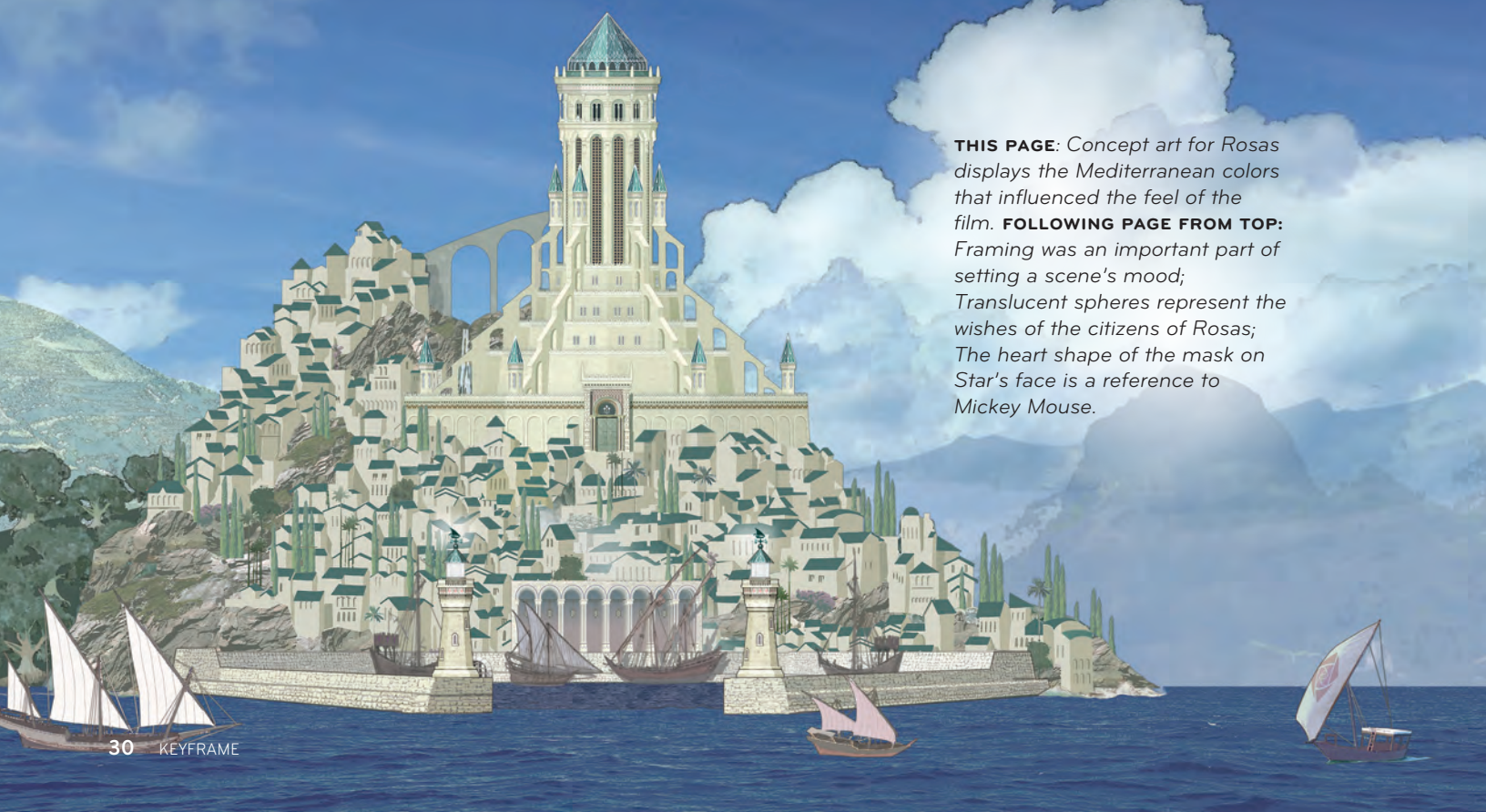
An added challenge is that storybook illustrations of yore used more than just watercolor paint. "These are not pure watercolors but watercolor illustrations that have an ink line component over the top," says Odermatt.

The classic illustrators would do a sketch, then paint with watercolor before going back with dark (usually black) ink and drawing in lines to help define the illustration. "We're doing the same thing," Odermatt says. "We're computing lines that could go everywhere if you saw the line render pass. But then we modulate that very carefully based on what we want you to look at and where we want you to look in a given frame."

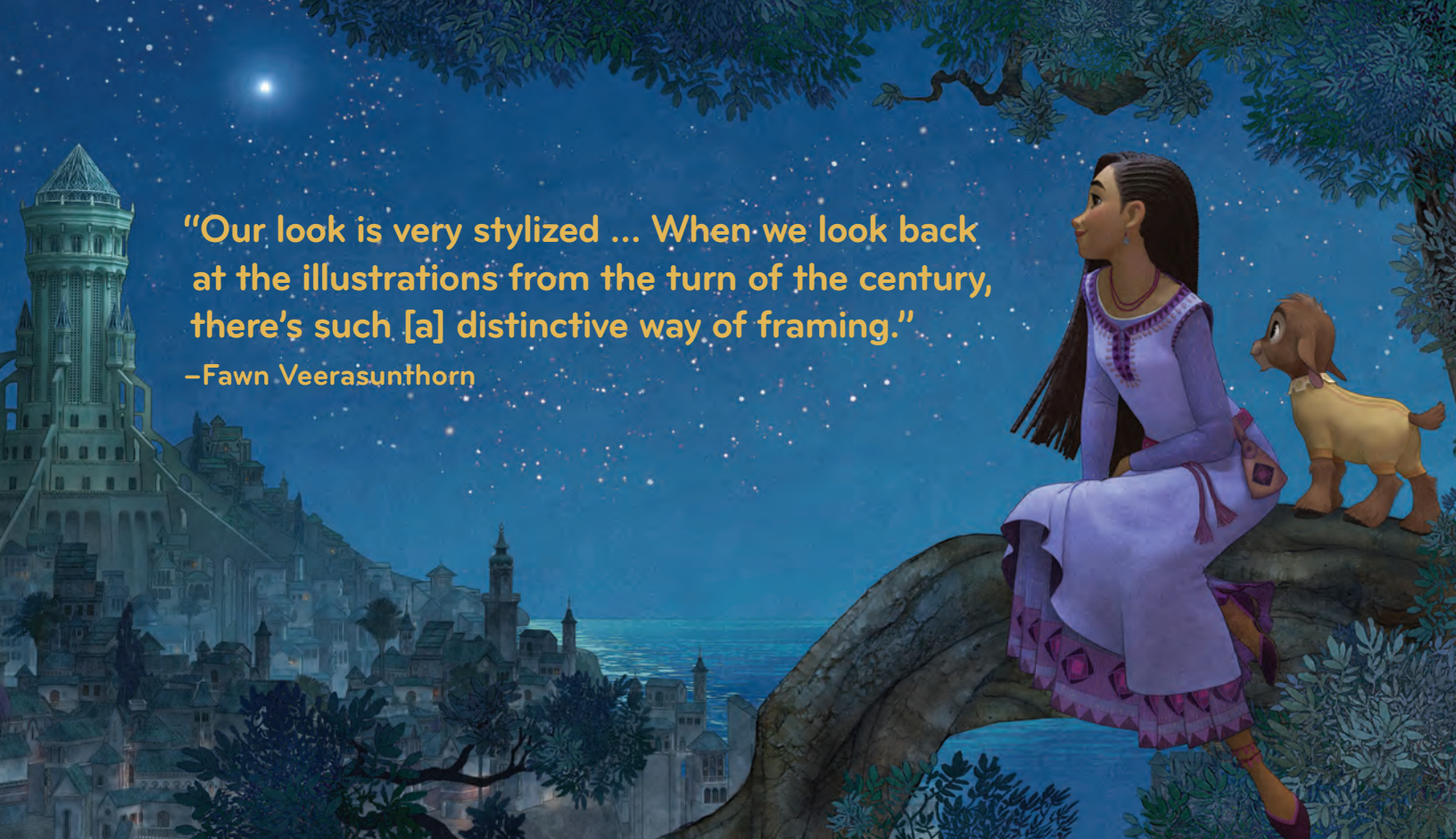
The storybook look was also achieved by not using any optical depth of field. Odermatt says this was a big challenge for the filmmakers because "we're used

to blurring things in the background or blurring things in the foreground that gives us a certain control over what the viewer looks at. In illustration that isn't the case. They don't tend to paint things blurry. They tend to paint things with less detail they don't want you to focus on and add detail where they do. Irrespective of distance from the viewer."

This technique was applied not only to objects and buildings in the background, but also to characters. "Based on visual development's beautiful designs, our talented modeling team crafted 27 unique faces and many body types to represent the various age groups of the people of Rosas," says Kaur. "Our cloth simulation team created many modular garments that could be mixed and matched to create outfit variations. On top of outfit and hairstyle variation, Character Look Development's primvars (primitive variables) toolset workflow allowed for the potential of hundreds of thousands of different combinations of colors, patterns, and textures." In the foreground all of this detail enables visibly distinctive variety, but as characters recede into the distance, "detail is reduced, lines are offset from bodies, and groups are clumped into sections of color so that they almost become a part of the architecture," says Kaur.



THIS PAGE: Concept art for *Rosas* displays the Mediterranean colors that influenced the feel of the film. **FOLLOWING PAGE FROM TOP:** Framing was an important part of setting a scene's mood; Translucent spheres represent the wishes of the citizens of Rosas; The heart shape of the mask on Star's face is a reference to Mickey Mouse.



“Our look is very stylized ... When we look back at the illustrations from the turn of the century, there’s such [a] distinctive way of framing.”

—Fawn Veerasunthorn

FRAME OF REFERENCE

One of the concerns of creating such beautiful illustrations is that “you don’t want anything in the background to become the star of the show,” says Womersley. “It’s the characters you really want to follow because it’s their story.” But you also want to make the most of the striking illustrations. To do this, he says: “We always try to get in as many beautiful establishing shots [as we can]. That’s a thing that comes from the older [Disney] films.”

Fawn Veerasunthorn, who directed *Wish* alongside Chris Buck, describes the emphasis on composition and framing for shots like these: “Our look is very stylized, and the way we frame our shots should reflect that as well. ... When we look back at the illustrations from the turn of the century, there’s such [a] distinctive way of framing.” She says the filmmakers worked with the production design team to break down the techniques of early Disney animation illustrators. This was done in black and white so the filmmakers wouldn’t be distracted by color and could focus on how to use framing to help define a character.

They also studied how the multiplane camera was used in classic Disney films.

Invented at Walt Disney Studios in the 1930s, this camera could film several planes (layers) of drawings for the foreground, middle ground, and background, and then the lens could focus on the relevant plane to create an illusion of depth. “This led us to the conclusion that when we shoot [*Wish*], let’s practice self-discipline on not moving the camera [as freely as] we usually do in a CG movie,” says Veerasunthorn.

While *Wish* is nostalgic, the filmmakers wanted it to feel like more than a blast from the long-ago past. This can be seen in numerous ways, from the pop soundtrack—there’s even an electric guitar in King Magnifico’s big scene—to the color palette. “Fairy tales tend to be set in Middle Europe, Northern Europe, kind of gothic,” says Womersley. But *Wish* is set on a fictional island off the coast of the Iberian Peninsula, “and with that you have [the] light, the azure Mediterranean Sea, the incredible colors of the foliage. That really pushed a lot of the freshness.”

“I love the duality that we always keep two things in mind,” says Veerasunthorn. “How do we honor the legacy, and how do we make something new.” ☺



THE WISH MAKERS

Walt Disney Animation Studios is celebrating its 100th anniversary, and TAG members have been a part of the magic for 70 of those years. Here, five members reflect on memorable moments at the studio over the decades.

JANE BAER Leading the Way

When Jane Baer (then Shattuck) visited L.A. on a vacation in the 1950s, she found herself touring ArtCenter and knew she wanted to attend. Despite being an artist himself, her father said no way. She could stay in Canada, get married, and have babies like other young women did. But Baer saved her money, hopped on a Greyhound bus, and started taking art classes.

“Luck followed me,” Baer says, “and when I ran out of money, Disney was hiring.” Her father’s old friend was Charlie Thorson, an early Disney artist, and because of that she was always intrigued by Disney films. She was thrilled to find herself in the same in-house animator training program that the men went through.

Because genders were separated then, she worked in a bullpen with six other women. But right down the hall were Marc Davis, Milt Kahl, Frank Thomas, and Ollie Johnston—members of Disney’s famed Nine Old Men. “We were all kids,” Baer says. “We didn’t realize how fortunate we were and what an experience it was. We [girls] could go in and talk to them. The doors were always open. They were so generous with their time and experience.”

Working as an in-betweener on *Sleeping Beauty*, Baer also did a bit of work under the direction of Thomas, who let her animate the candles in the iconic melting cake scene. But what she remembers most are Aurora’s eyes: “We had tough taskmasters on getting the eyes correct.” She used pencil and paper, working frame by frame, maybe a handful of drawings a

day. “Drawing eyes day after day as they were expressing the story. Those eyes! I would go to sleep at night dreaming of eyes,” she says.

Baer married another Disney animator, Iwao Takamoto, and when *Sleeping Beauty* was done, she retired to suburbia. But she says: “I wasn’t cut out to be a suburban housewife making chocolate chip cookies. Coffee klatches—it was awful. I was totally miserable.” Several years later she was divorced and working in animation again.

During the following years, her career wove in and out of Disney. She returned as a full-time animator on *The Rescuers*, and she also worked on films including *Pete’s Dragon*, *The Fox and the Hound*, and *Mickey’s Christmas Carol*. A lot of the work was done outside the studio when they would offload overflow scenes.

Remarrying, she took on the last name Baer and co-founded The Baer Animation Company. She was the head of the studio when Disney asked if they would take over the Toontown and Benny the Cab sequences in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Baer redesigned Benny and supervised his animation, working at the heart of a movie that would change the shape of what animation is capable of doing.

Baer calls the animation business a family, and she is now the last of “the girls” from the lifelong friendships she made in the bullpen. Reflecting on the origins of her career, she says: “Way back in the stone ages when I came into the business, women were not encouraged to progress like they are today. You were considered pushy if you tried to exceed your boundaries. If the male animators offered you something, that’s different. [But] nobody said, go out there and animate. We just did as we were told,

really. It was a totally different time.”

Baer does not make these observations with bitterness. She also calls it a “wonderful time” and notes that it was hard for many of her male colleagues to advance, as well, because of the creative monopoly held by Disney’s Nine Old Men. So how did she manage to build the foundation for such a long and successful career? She credits a combination of stubbornness and “loving the business,” which she still does to this day.



MARK HENN

Changing of the Guard

In 1980, in his second year at CalArts, Mark Henn was hired at Disney. At that time, the studio was reaching the end of an era. His training program was under the direction of Eric Larson—the last of Disney’s Nine Old Men still working at the studio.

Henn started on *The Fox and the Hound*, assisting Glen Keane’s unit, and then was working on some effects when, a year in, in order to get a promotion, he was required to do a personal animation test. He based his on Mickey Mouse. This grabbed the attention of Disney veteran Burny Mattinson, who assigned the relative newcomer to animate the legendary mouse for *Mickey’s Christmas Carol*.

Henn calls being trusted with Mickey “certainly a good way to start.” It meant that he was being recognized for producing quality work. He did a brief stint on *Black Cauldron* before Mattinson pulled him over to *The Great Mouse Detective*. “Things took off after that,” he says.

“Working here at Disney has been a wish for me since I was small boy.”

This was a pivotal time for Disney as the studio figured out how to move beyond the Nine Old Men who had helped shape it. “Obviously there was the literal changing of the guard,” Henn says. “But there was also a lot of dust yet to settle when I started because [they’d just had the] Don Bluth exodus.” Bluth had left to start his own studio, taking more than a dozen Disney animators with him. “That left *Fox and the Hound* in the lurch,” says Henn. But while the moment was a rocky one, he

feels it opened up opportunities that he and other animators might not have had right away “had Bluth stuck around.”

A few years later, Jeffrey Katzenberg took over Walt Disney Studios, and changes were afoot again. There had been ongoing doubts about whether *The Fox and the Hound* should be finished. Finally, Katzenberg said, “‘We’ll make it, but I want it made in 18 months,’ which was at that time unheard of,” says Henn. “[Disney] just made movies, and every two or three or four years at some point somebody would say, oh, I think we can wrap this thing up in six months and let’s make that our target. It’s not like it is today where you set release dates and almost back into it. That was a big adjustment that of course affected everything since then.”

As the 1990s arrived, Henn participated firsthand in the Disney renaissance that snowballed with the Academy Award for Best Picture nomination for *Beauty and the Beast*. He was the Supervising Animator for Belle, as well as *The Little Mermaid’s* Ariel and numerous other iconic characters. But Henn believes there was a natural progression that led to the era of blockbuster successes. “With *The Great Mouse Detective*, things started to turn around. I think there was a trust the studio was developing with our [new] generation of artists,” he says. “The stories, the ideas, the management that we had. We grew in confidence as to our abilities. We had an enthusiasm, we had some success. That was the stepping stone to each subsequent film—a little bit better and a little bit better after that. ... Working here at Disney has been a wish for me since I was small boy. Having that opportunity to be the next generation after the first generation—I’ve been very blessed.”





JIN KIM

Opening New Doors

Any company in business for a century inevitably undergoes major transitions, and when Jin Kim arrived at Disney in 1995, the studio was experiencing one of those moments. DreamWorks had just launched its animation studio, siphoning off Disney animators in the process. But loss can lead to gain, and “Disney Studios started hiring new people from all around the world,” says Kim. “That opened the door wide open.” Born and raised in South Korea, he was working in Toronto and wasn’t sure if Disney would hire him, but he thought it was worth a try.

Kim started as a 2D animator before another seismic shift took place in the animation industry. The success of *Toy Story* ushered in an era of CG, so Kim pivoted, learned CG animation, and became a CG animator. “That was brutal,” he says. “A lot of old-time animators, veterans, they tried to learn new technology ... they couldn’t adapt, and they left.”

Kim, on the other hand, continued to evolve. After spending his first decade at Disney as a Visual Development Artist, he began working on *Bolt*. Character Designer Joe Moshier asked him to do some additional character designs. Slowly, Kim learned more about the designing process, and while he was working on *Tangled*, Director Glen Keane offered him a choice between CG animation and character design. Kim chose the latter, designed some of the movie’s characters, and embarked on a completely new path.

Kim went on to create some of Disney’s most popular modern characters for movies like *Big Hero 6*, *Wreck-It Ralph*, *Zootopia*, *Raya and the Last Dragon*, and *Encanto*, and he played a significant role in the look of Elsa in *Frozen*. But if he had to choose, he considers *Tangled* the most meaningful project he’s worked on. He spent almost four years on it “under the supervision of

a great artist. He taught me so much,” Kim says. “It was almost intimidating working with Glen, to show him my drawings to get approved. But at the same time, I was so excited ... I could learn.”

As the years passed, Kim observed another change in the studio: a more inclusive environment with the hiring of more women and people of color. And the characters began to reflect the broader world. “*Moana* is an example. *Big Hero 6* is another good example,” he says of the movie he worked on as a Supervising Animator in which the main character is half Japanese.

If Kim were to offer any advice to his younger self starting out, he says he would have explored more, traveled to different countries, and “watched other people’s

“There are not many people [who could] work here 20 years, 30 years ... and I’m one of them. I feel lucky.”

lives, how they live,” he says. “Eventually, I think, those experiences can become your asset to work on movies.” Ever adaptable, he’s instead broadened his horizons on the job, and his career has been filled with high points both professionally and personally, like when he was in South Korea for the premiere of *Big Hero 6*, and the audience cheered their own “hometown hero.” As for Disney, he calls it a dream come true. “I just wished I could stay here five years, and it became, after five, oh another five would be nice. Ten years became 20 years,” he says. “There are not many people [who could] work here 20 years, 30 years ... and I’m one of them. I feel lucky.”

DALE MAYEDA

Strengthening Ties

It's no exaggeration to say that *The Lion King* changed Dale Mayeda's life. A Computer Science grad from UC Irvine, he entered the job market when the economy was taking a nose-dive, and he wound up working as an assistant manager at Enterprise Rent-a-Car when he went with a group of friends to see the story of Simba. "They had that sequence where the wildebeests come over the cliff—it was so visceral and amazing," he says. "I was like, I don't know how I'm going to do it, but I've got to get into that. I figured they must have used computers because there was so much dimensionality to the movement of the camera."

Not long after, he walked into his job and quit. His sister was interning at this time with a company developing software that would eventually become Maya. Call it a perfect storm. He took a class, sent what he calls his "terrible reel" all over Hollywood, got work at some small post-production facilities, and eventually landed at Disney at the turn of the millennium, working in the live-action division. After a few months he was brought over to supervise the effects department on what was to be the studio's first CG film.

That film didn't pan out, but not long after, he was hired as Effects Supervisor on 2005's *Chicken Little*. While this is the movie that would become Disney's CG first, Mayeda says the filmmakers wanted it to have characteristics of a 2D film in areas like style and animation. But around that time many 2D animators were leaving and there was "a lot of weirdness," he says. So they put together a crew that combined both 2D and 3D Effects Animators. "We tried to create an environment where we're all effects animation and it doesn't matter whether you're 2D or 3D. We tried to make it as collaborative as possible. It

actually worked. It started fostering an environment within our effects animation department where there wasn't any sort of rivalry—people were really helping each other."

Being able to experience both sides of the craft has been meaningful for Mayeda. As a kid he loved to draw, and teachers praised him for being good at art. But when he started high school, "Macs were starting to happen. PCs were starting to happen," he says. "It was exciting and new. Then when I was in college, that first year, I took an art class with some of my other computer science friends ... and we were like, we should switch." In the end, he felt the need to be practical. While he wishes he'd studied both art and computers, he says he's lucky because being on the job "feels like [I'm always] taking this master class in design, style, and shape language."

The industry leap from 2D to CG had already happened when Mayeda came on board, but there were still big changes to come. He notes the arrival of Pixar as "probably the biggest shift," explaining that before, you worked within your department and didn't get to see much of what everyone else in other departments on a film were working on. But when Disney bought Pixar, that studio's influence permeated the workflow at Disney, opening doors for all of the departments to collaborate together.

Mayeda says the first time they tried it was on *Bolt*. At first it didn't feel comfortable with so many people commenting on his work, but by the end of the show he thought: "Wow, this is amazing. Since then, we've become an extremely collaborative [studio] to where everyone's showing everyone stuff and throwing in ideas and working really tightly together ... collaborating not just in our department but across multiple departments, to always take whatever we're creating to the highest level."



FAWN VEERASUNTHORN

Celebrating Fresh Voices

Persistence pays off. Fawn Veerasunthorn is proof. Having always wanted to work at Disney, she applied three times. “It became my hobby,” she says. “When I see them put out a posting, I think, oh, it’s that time of year.”

Veerasunthorn originally applied with production work she had done at other studios. She got feedback that the work was great, but it didn’t reflect who she was as an artist. “That’s when I started doing comics on the side,” she says. “I found that I’m doing storyboards during the day, and at night I get to know who I am, be myself. I put those in my portfolio.”

Veerasunthorn always loved drawing and hoped it was something she could do for a living. Growing up in Thailand she was told that wasn’t possible. Fortunately, her family was supportive of her going to school for art, but even then she was told, go try it for a year—you’ll be back. Instead, her third interview using artwork demonstrating her personal talent landed her a job at Disney and a first credit as a Storyboard Artist on 2013’s *Frozen*. “I’ve been here ever since,” she says.

She went on to work on *Zootopia*, *Moana*, and *Frozen 2*. Then came *Raya and the Last Dragon*, where she was Head of Story. “That was a big step, a learning curve,” she says. “Not only working on my own sequences, [but] the big picture of the film. That’s when I started understanding, the film has to mean something to the person making it.”

Veerasunthorn still considers her job a never-ending education. “I have favorite artists that I stalk at work,” she says, naming colleagues like Chris Williams, Byron Howard, and John Ripa who became her mentor on *Raya*. “His work has been so iconic, and I’m like, how do you pick those moments and have people remember [them] forever,” she says. “Because that’s

what happens with Disney movies, right? They live on beyond their own life.”

This is something Veerasunthorn learned more about during the part of the Disney movie-making process where a film is screened for the entire studio. “What I found was they would pick out ... just one image per sequence so people could talk about it and refer back,” she says. “Early on I’m like, they never use a really great image of mine. [And] I thought, it’s not them, it’s me. I need to work harder on finding the moment to represent that sequence.” From that point on, she focused on identifying those images, and as she evolved into a position of leadership, “I told everybody, think about that, find that first, and then make that your true guiding light,” she says.

Veerasunthorn embodies the demographic change that has taken place at Disney. Young, female, and Thai, she was a director on the movie *Wish*. Age is relative, though, as she talks about the even younger generation and how what influenced her as a child is so different from what influenced them. Japanese manga, for example. “Also the breadth and variety of what everyone has been exposed to,” she says. “I think that helps with bringing in the modern sense of storytelling.”

Still, she notes, with younger animators she sees a lot of anxiety. “Am I good enough? I’m working at Disney, and everyone is so much better,” she says. She wants to tell them that everyone deals with that, and she gives them the advice she wishes she could have given her younger self: “Trust my instincts a lot more. Go with my gut. In the beginning of a career there’s so much pressure of trying to fit in ... Something I learned over time [is] to not shy away. When I have something bubbling up in me, just speak up, speak it out, it will be okay. We’re all friends, we all respect each other. I wish that people would recognize how powerful the spark of hope within you is. That’s what kept me going all these years.” ☺



MEMORY LANE

DISNEY ANIMATORS DISTILL 100 YEARS INTO A NOSTALGIC SHORT FILM

Dan Abraham and Trent Correy spent eight months planning the eight-and-a-half-minute *Once Upon a Studio*. This wasn't a typical job for the Disney Writer-Directors, though. They were working in secret.

"It didn't come from marketing or corporate or the boss," says Correy. Instead, it came from the two self-proclaimed Disney fans wanting to celebrate what Disney characters mean to them.

In early conversations they realized their fascination with what goes on behind the scenes and set the short inside the real-life studio. Next, Abraham says: "Trent had the great idea that the characters come to life from the artwork on our walls. I can just see it—they're all popping out of their frames and how magical that's going to be."

Every year at Disney Animation, a big group photo is taken in front of the studio, and Abraham says, "We thought, what if Mickey's gathering everyone for this photo for the 100-year anniversary." But to do this concept, they needed to figure out how to unite 543 characters from 62 feature films and numerous shorts. "It was just the most fun puzzle," Correy says.

Once the duo let the mouse out of the bag and pitched their idea to studio head Jennifer Lee, the question was not whether the short would get made, but how.

It was decided they would not use old footage but rather have artists recreate characters with original artwork. While they knew it would be more efficient to tackle the 2D characters digitally, it was important to them that each one was hand-drawn.

They were excited by the thought of "bringing back heavy hitter animators to revisit their characters," Abraham says. "We got Ruben Aquino to come back and

draw [*The Little Mermaid's*] Ursula. He hadn't drawn Ursula in 30 years." Along with those who came out of retirement, others were veteran hand-drawn animators still working in-house, including Randy Haycock, Mark Henn, and Eric Goldberg who was head of the hand-drawn team.

Abraham and Correy wanted every character to look and sound the way fans remember them, and they used the studio's

characters, *Once Upon a Studio* is also a tribute to a beloved Disney legend. The short opens with Burny Mattinson and a young Disney intern leaving the building for the night. Mattinson was able to see a rough cut of the short before he died this February at the age of 87. Active to the end, he started at Disney in 1953—just one year after The Animation Guild was founded.

"Trent had the great idea that the characters come to life from the artwork on our walls. I can just see it—they're all popping out of their frames and how magical that's going to be."

—Dan Abraham

century of reference material to achieve this goal. An even bigger challenge? How to combine hand-drawn and CG animation. "We wanted to celebrate 2D flatness," Abraham says, "but then it had to live next to Moana."

While they had two pipelines going, one for hand-drawn and one for CG, "at the end of the day, it was just communication," Correy says. "People working together in the building in Burbank under one roof."

As well as being a reunion of favorite

"He is such a part of our history and our legacy," Abraham says, noting that having Mattinson around was a reminder of what has continued to work about Disney films through the decades—sincerity. As well, Correy says they were inspired by Mattinson's philosophy: "Have fun making [movies], and it will shine through." ☺



Once Upon a Studio images courtesy of Walt Disney Animation Studios.



THIS PAGE: Characters from classic Disney films such as **(FROM LEFT)** Sleeping Beauty, Lady and the Tramp and Moana were created anew but had to look and feel exactly as viewers remembered them.



SEASON'S SCREENINGS

THIS PAGE (TOP): Creating realistic dance movements with the limitations of the Trolls' bodies required in-depth knowledge of dance theory; (BOTTOM) and FOLLOWING PAGE: Visual development art explores various aspects of character movement.

Leo and Trolls Band Together may not seem like they have a lot in common. One is about a grouchy elderly lizard, the other an exuberantly youthful boy band. In fact, both films showcase artful approaches to the importance of movement in creating realistic characters. **By Karen Briner**

BUST A MOVE

Getting the band back together takes on new meaning in DreamWorks Animation's latest *Trolls* movie, *Trolls Band Together*. Branch, protagonist of the previous films, must reunite with his family band, BroZone, in order to rescue their brother Floyd from an evil popstar duo. Only the perfect harmony sung by the brothers can shatter the diamond

prison and set Floyd free. What follows is a musical road-trip adventure.

With the film's focus on boy bands, Head of Character Animation Ben Willis says he realized that the animation team needed to do a deep dive into dance, with dance moves that should be a true homage to the genre. He didn't want to do just big poses, but rather wanted the poses to feel authentic to the style of dance they were trying to recreate.

The film's animators participated in "Road Trip Week," an intensive learning experience for which Animation Supervisor Brooke Shay Bradford introduced music theory and dance, while another supervisor created lessons on singing. Bradford had studied dance and choreography back before animation was even on her radar, and she now realizes how much her background and passions have influenced



her animation work. “When I started on *Trolls*, it was like, ‘Oh, this is what it was all for. This is why I got into this,’” she says. She advises colleagues to pursue their passions “because it really feeds the work that we do as animators.”

For the music theory lessons, Bradford included song structure, rhythm, and syncopation, and how to count beats and find the pulse of the music. She showed animators how to break that down and translate it into frames per second on a timeline. She wanted to provide the animators with a blueprint to work with, so if they didn’t have the choreography for a particular moment, they would be able to use their new understanding about the music and experiment to come up with their own moves.

Bradford’s own method is to first get familiar with the music and count out the beats. Then she’ll figure out the overall song structure, taking note of chorus, verse, and changes in dynamics

Kudelka and AJ Harpold, who mapped out the film’s dance sequences.

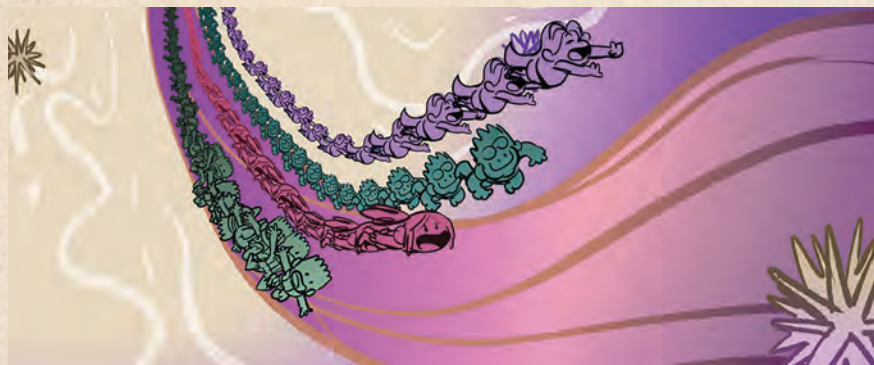
Using the choreography reference, Bradford introduced the principles of dance to the animators, such as the direction dancers are moving, their location, and how high and low they are in relation to each other. Other considerations included identifying where the center of gravity is, which part of the body is leading, and the different pathways dancers are taking to move a certain part of the body or to get from one location to another. All of these elements are important to create dance sequences that feel realistic despite the cartoonish shape of the characters.

For example, Bradford looked at the posing of hands and feet and how they impact the overall silhouette. Clear silhouettes are especially important for the style in a *Trolls* film. What can be challenging, she says, is that the proportions of the troll characters

In addition to the principles, Bradford reviewed the dynamic qualities of movement—suspended, sustained, percussive, etc.—and how they can be exaggerated by the animator to add texture and clarify the performance, which can be pushed in the *Trolls* animation style. “There’s a lot of ... hidden scaling of limbs ... just to try to get the poses to read clearly for the audience,” Bradford says. If the choreography requires a low knee-bend pose, for example, the animators exaggerated and lengthened the legs so that viewers can read that knee bend and silhouette. Having previously worked on *Trolls World Tour*, the choreographers knew that the trolls can’t put their arms overhead, and they would try to avoid that. There was a lot of taking the essence of a pose and reconfiguring it to work with the trolls’ proportions.

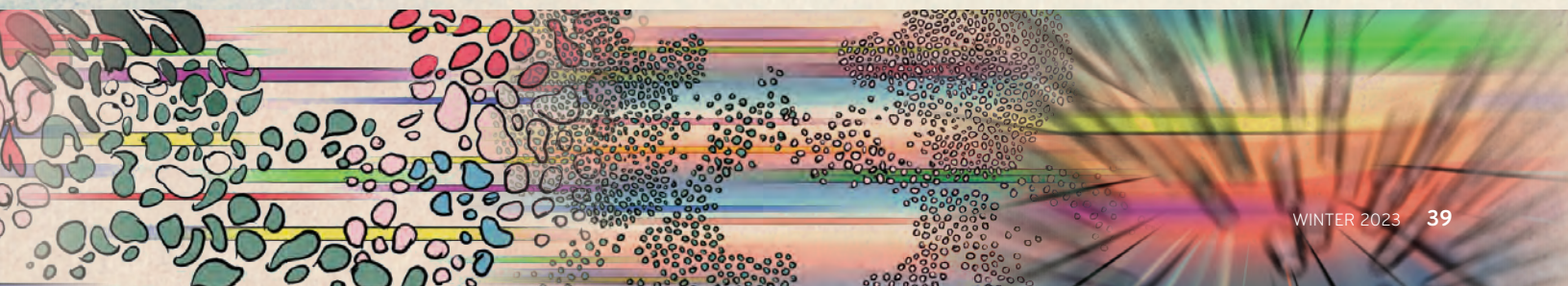
Willis points out that animating dance can be intimidating, which is why he wanted to get into the specifics of speaking the language of dance to prepare the animators. As part of this learning process, he tasked animators with coming up with components that would only be possible in the *Trolls*’ universe. “So it wasn’t just taking the dance reference and interpreting it,” he says. “It was also like, can you ‘troll-ify’ it? Or can you do something where the Troll defies gravity, or uses their hair some way, to dance.”

Willis says that while they had the freedom to interpret, overall they stayed true to what the choreographers came up with, and that, along with the deep dive into music and dance, paid off, resulting in sequences that feel genuine as well as entertaining and fun.



or volume. All this, she says, plays into what you do with the dance. She’ll spend time visualizing before studying the choreography created by Justin Timberlake’s choreographers, Marty

don’t allow a lot of room for big movement; they have stubby limbs and fingers, and giant heads. “So what you can take from the choreography and translate onto a troll’s body is very limited,” she explains.





Leo images courtesy of Netflix



GRUMPY OLD MAN

How do you create a relatable reptile who's grumpy but likeable and has emotional depth? This was the challenge for Animation Director Jason Figliozi and the creative team on Netflix's *Leo*, a movie that revolves around an eponymous classroom pet, a lizard who learns that at 74 he has only one year left to live. With time running out, Leo plans to escape the terrarium he shares with Squirtle, a cranky turtle, but those plans fall apart when a mean substitute teacher arrives and Leo ends up serving as the class therapist.

The story unfolds across multiple settings, from a classroom terrarium to the Everglades, but the heart of the film is about kids who are leaving fifth grade and going into middle school, and their emotional journeys during this

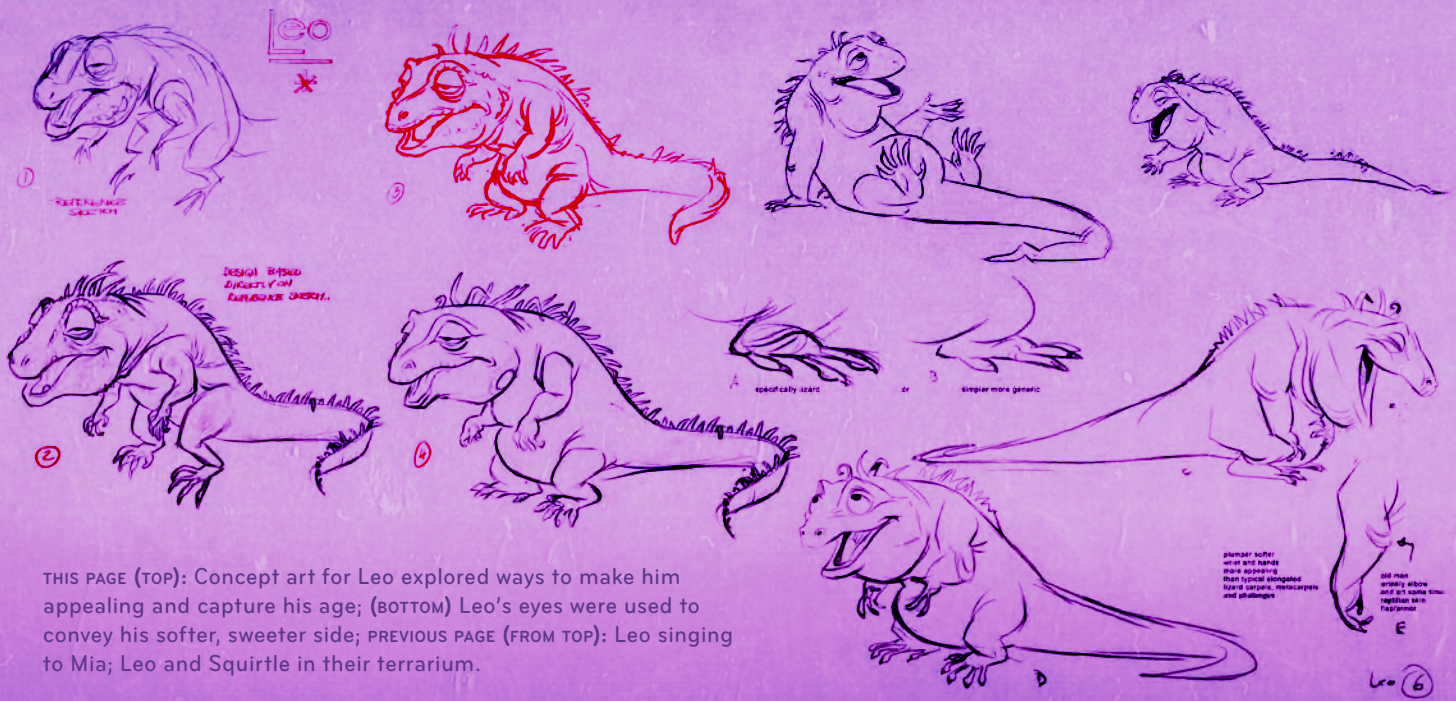
transition. To authentically capture that, says Figliozi, "We really just tried to dive into us at that age." They also spoke to fifth graders to find out what drives and worries them on a daily basis.

As for Leo, the starting point was a species of reptile called a tuatara. Figliozi says there were many versions of this lizard-like creature before it finally evolved into the Leo found onscreen. Trying to figure out what an old lizard would look like factored into that evolution. For references, they studied quadrupeds and reptiles and watched how they move. Then they pushed it from there to make a character that was uniquely their own.

Figliozi and his animation team created rules for keeping Leo in character. "Leo is a 74-year-old lizard, so we wanted him to feel that age," he says. This meant that

his movements had to be slow, deliberate, and methodical, with small gestures to show that he's conserving energy. They paid close attention to his elbows. "If you brought his elbows out and revealed that negative space under his arms, he automatically felt younger," says Figliozi, adding that if they moved him too fast, this also made him feel more youthful and useful, so they minimized his movement. They also took care to ensure that his tail did not feel snaky or serpent-like, keeping it mostly behind him, except for scenes where he uses it like an appendage.

Figliozi describes a moment when fifth-grader Mia tells Leo, "You remind me of my grandpa." He says they brought that warmth of a favorite relative to the character to help with the emotional connection. They achieved this with the shaping of Leo's eyebrows and by being careful not to make Leo look mad, particularly when he's speaking to the children. "He could skew angry pretty quickly," says Figliozi. "If we just brought ... his inner brows down a little bit, he would turn into a different character, and we really didn't want him to feel off-putting or irritated in any way." They kept his brows up higher and made his eyes look kind by pushing his lower lids up a little bit.



THIS PAGE (TOP): Concept art for Leo explored ways to make him appealing and capture his age; (BOTTOM) Leo's eyes were used to convey his softer, sweeter side; PREVIOUS PAGE (FROM TOP): Leo singing to Mia; Leo and Squirtle in their terrarium.

When Leo and Squirtle are alone in their terrarium, they are curmudgeons, and Figliozzi says that there's a nice contrast between Leo as a scowling grump and the arc of his personality getting warmer as he starts to enjoy helping the kids. "There's a sweetness to him," says Figliozzi, that's conveyed by subtle smiles and happy eyes. "Hopefully you feel the warmth and the contrast between when he's hanging out with the kids ... compared to where he was in the beginning of the film."

One of Figliozzi's favorite sequences is where Leo is singing Mia to sleep and put her at ease. Even though Leo genuinely thinks the words of the song are helpful, in fact they aren't very nice, and he's unintentionally giving bad advice. "I think that's one of the funniest, but also warmest scenes, of the movie. It's just a really funny mash-up of sincerity with harshness," Figliozzi

says, noting how tricky it was to find that balance.

Instead of having Mia respond in a big way to the song, she listens quietly and conveys her emotion in her eyes. "There's a moment of her looking taken aback and a really subtle eyebrow raise and an eye flare right when Leo starts singing, which I think hits really well," says Figliozzi. This is in contrast with Leo, who's very performative and who's smiling, not realizing the lyrics are actually dismissive of Mia's emotions.

Layering all these nuances was challenging, and they worried that it could come across as mean. But at a screening, when the audience laughed at the first line of the song, it hit home that people connected with it. Figliozzi also gives much credit to Adam Sandler's performance which he says combined with the filmmakers' artistry to make Leo "animation gold." 🍷

"Hopefully you feel the warmth and the contrast between when he's hanging out with the kids ... compared to where he was in the beginning of the film."

—JASON FIGLIOZZI,
ANIMATION DIRECTOR, LEO



H O L L I D A Y



M O D E R N

TAG'S FIFTH ANNUAL HOLIDAY GIFT MARKET OFFERS UNIQUE, HAND-CRAFTED TREASURES THAT SHOWCASE OUR MEMBERS' AFTER-HOURS TALENTS.

Back in 2019, Ashley Long pitched the idea of a holiday gift market featuring goods made by TAG members. “We work so hard at our animation jobs and ‘making art’ can lose its luster as it gets buried in layers of notes and the stress of the daily grind,” says Long, who is a TAG Executive Board Trustee and Shop Steward for Robin Red Breast (Titmouse). “Celebrating the hand-crafted works our members excel at in their personal lives is an opportunity for pure joy! The joy of the shopper, supporting local artists directly and scoring one-of-a-kind pieces. The joy of the artisans, getting to use neglected, non-drawing hand muscles and parts of our brain that come alive when making art that is truly our own.”

Held in person, the first market was a great success. With the arrival of the pandemic, gears were switched, and the market was online in 2020 and 2021. But we were able to return in real life (and online) last year, and this year, our fifth annual market features an even more impressive selection, with highlights here in our gift guide. Not only does it showcase the diverse talents of our members, Long says, “In a world riddled with AI, a return to crafts direct from the heart and made by hand feels like the breath of fresh air we all need.”

TOP: Jackie Cadiente

Tinsel the Elf – 5" tall with a moveable head. \$75



TALKING TUFT
Janae Hall

It's not an obvious connection—rugs and animation. But Janae Hall says that while she loves creating original art for rugs: “A lot of the rugs I make pull from images from existing TV shows, video games, and pop culture. It's fun to ... see it made in this tactile, completely unique new medium.”

Formerly a staff writer on *Zokie of Planet Ruby*, and currently freelance writing on projects at various studios, Hall was looking for a creative outlet that was hands-on and tactile. “When I started seeing people [on Instagram] making custom-tufted rugs, I thought that was something I could totally do,” she says. She bought a tufting gun and taught herself how to make pieces by analyzing the Instagram videos she'd already been watching and finding tutorials from creators she liked.

With hand-carved detailing, Hall's playful, plush rugs are one-of-a-kind and handmade with 100% acrylic yarn and black felt backing. They can be used on the floor (in a low-traffic area) or as wall décor. Hall also offers commissioned work.

janaetufts.com



Egg Rug
 Appx. 20.5" x 24"
\$150

Dango Rug
 Appx. 12" x 35"
\$285



Craftsman-style Accent Lamp
 Mica shade with etched copper base; seven-foot-long cord with rotary switch; includes torpedo-style candelabra bulb
 12" high x 4.5" base
\$260



Landscape-pattern Light Switch Plate
 Etched copper protected with clear lacquer; includes two screws
 2.75" x 4.5"
\$53



CRAFT MAN
James Mattson

James Mattson always admired Craftsman style, but he couldn't afford original antique lamps and didn't care for reproductions. Then, he says, “I stumbled on a *Popular Mechanics*' magazine article from 1910 called ‘How to Make Etched Copper Lampshades’ and started making my own.” He got such a good response he started selling them.

Mattson began in animation production before switching over to writing with a stint at Disney Feature Animation. More recently working in live action, he credits aspects of his career as inspiration for his copperwork. “In the ‘80s I worked in backlight motion graphics, often on spinning chrome logos for TV stations, and then I worked for a while in special effects for 2D animation,” he says. “Many of the EFX [projects] involved putting silhouettes over a lightbox and then modifying the color and glow. I guess I would say that animation work taught me how to look at light in a way that's very useful for my copper lamps.” Mattson even makes shadow lamps that directly apply diffusion techniques he used with film.

JamesMattson.com
etsy.com/shop/JamesMattsonCopper



ON A TANGENT
Anna O'Brian

Anna O'Brian is always on the lookout for renter-friendly ways to make her apartment cuter. When she saw videos about making stained glass on TikTok and

YouTube, she thought: "I could do that!" She started small with suncatchers, gradually working her way up to window panels.

The Florida native came to L.A. in 2013 to study character animation at CalArts, and she has been working in TV as a Storyboard Artist and Director ever since. Currently, she's directing Disney TVA's upcoming *Big City Greens* movie. Unlike TV animation, which moves quickly, O'Brian says, "Making stained glass is an extremely slow and tedious process ... so working in this art form has been a nice change of pace."

As well, stained glass design has its own unique rules that differ from animation. "In art school we're taught to avoid tangents in our drawings at all costs," O'Brian says, "but in stained glass they're essential to a design's structural integrity."

etsy.com/shop/Annacrafts4you

Tulip
4" x 7" with 3" chain
\$50

Mermaid Suncatcher
1.5" x 33.5"
\$50



Earring Holder
Pine, balsa,
cedar, maple
6 3/4" x 5 1/4" x 3 1/2"
\$50



Earrings
Cedar, black walnut,
pine, maple
2" x 1 1/8" x 1 1/8"
\$25



IRREGULAR BEAUTY
Kate McMillan

Having worked as a Visual Development Artist at DreamWorks TV, Kate McMillan is a Location Designer at Disney TVA on *Big City Greens*. She's also a nonfiction and middle grade fiction author. Then there's her woodwork.

"I studied architecture in college and fell in love with the process of building models in the woodshop," McMillan says. She started taking woodworking classes, and after college, she got a fellowship to study traditional Norwegian boatbuilding in Norway.

"I love woodworking because the parameters serve as inspiration instead of barriers, which I think is true in visual development, as well," she says. "Wood is messy—it has knots and unusual grain patterns and can act in funny ways against different tools—but this irregularity makes the final design interesting and purposeful. In animation, the story, budget, and style create all kinds of similar challenges that end up pushing the design somewhere new and specific that I could never have thought of if given a completely knot-free prompt."

kategmcmillan@gmail.com



**Michelle
Armstrong**
Hand-sewn Felt
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Victoria Orolfo
Hanging Crochet Plant
Appx. 3" x 12"
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**Tara
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Plaster Spoon Rest
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**Diana
Grigorian**
Ladybug Insect Steampunk Necklace
Made with vintage watch gears.
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**Alison
Donato**
Ceramic Mugs
Sizes vary
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Maureen Kuo
Handmade Sad Face
Clay & Acrylic Pins
Appx. 1" x 2" x .5"
\$25 each

FIND MORE GIFTS ON OUR WEBSITE!

animationguild.org/2023HolidayMarket

The varied talents of TAG members shine in this year's online Virtual Holiday Market featuring an array of products, from jewelry and ceramics to woodwork and textiles. Whether you need a coffee cup, tote bag, or catnip fart—yes, you read that right—you'll find it here!



YOU'RE INVITED

AMONG THIS YEAR'S INDUCTEES TO THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES, THREE TAG MEMBERS REFLECT ON WHAT THE HONOR MEANS TO THEM.



NATHAN WARNER
LAYOUT ARTIST

To become a member of the “Academy,” the foundational criterion is excellence. Membership consists of filmmakers, artistic craftspeople, and others who have made notable contributions in the area of theatrically released movies. Prospective members are reviewed by committees and considered by the Academy’s Board of Governors who decide which individuals will receive a prestigious invitation.

For Layout Artist Nathan Warner, who got his start in animation in 1994 and has worked on films such as *Moana* and *Encanto*, “I was at home, and I kept getting calls and texts congratulating me, but I didn’t know what for,” he says. “It wasn’t until my mother called saying she saw my name in *Variety* that I knew what was happening.”

Puss in Boots: The Last Wish Director Joel Crawford, who’s been in the industry for nearly two decades, was equally surprised. He was on vacation, about to go surfing with his kids. “I received a flurry of texts from friends and co-workers, and then I spotted the email from the Academy informing me of my acceptance,” he says. “I just took in the moment on the beach with my family. It was a great day.”

Recognition by the Academy is obviously rewarding, but there’s an element that makes membership particularly meaningful. Candidates must be sponsored by two Academy members from the branch in which they seek admission. In this case: Short Films and Feature Animation.

With 40 years in the industry, on films ranging from *The Little Mermaid* to *Paws of Fury: The Legend of Hank*, Animation Artist Dan Jeup says the most rewarding aspect of this experience was that his longtime friends and colleagues, Kathy Zielinski and Dave Pruiksma, who he highly respects, “sponsored me on the basis of their knowledge,

skill, and expertise. It made me feel great that they valued my contribution to the animation industry.”

Crawford calls his sponsors “two incredibly talented individuals ... Their endorsement was not only significant, but also held a very personal meaning for me.” And Warner says of his sponsors, Kyle Odermatt and Scott Kersavage: “I credit Kyle with giving a 20-year-old kid a chance and welcoming me into Disney Animation which really propelled my career, experience, and education. Scott gave me the chance to be Director of Cinematography on *Zootopia*, which will likely be the highlight of my career. My admiration and gratitude to these two are as high as it comes, and to see such praise in their recommendation letters to the Academy will be a highlight in my life.”

Warner also notes the significance of the Academy recognizing those who work in the animation industry. “Often animation is only thought of as children’s entertainment,” he says. “The category is simply not fully understood. I’ve had the opportunity to work with several amazing Directors of Photography in live action, including the great Roger Deakins—who was surprised to learn how much care, complication, and precision we put into every single frame in animation.”

“Filmmaking has always been a beautiful art form that connects people,” Crawford says, while Jeup adds, “I think it’s important that people ... who truly love great cinema and have studied and understand it deeply, carry on the tradition of making films at their highest level and support the best films and people who make them.”



JOEL CRAWFORD
DIRECTOR



DAN JEUP
ANIMATION ARTIST



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are only matched by its emotional depth.
IT DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE.”

THE WRAP



EMPIRE



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ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE

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