

## ABOUT

ASIFA was founded in 1960 in Annecy, France by a group of international animators to increase world-wide visibility of animated film. ASIFA's membership includes animation professionals and fans from more than 50 countries.

ASIFA-East, based in New York City, is the Northeast chapter. We host screenings, workshops, and panel discussions on all things animation, and the ASIFA-East Animation Film Festival, which debuted in 1969, is the oldest animation-only festival in the US.

## BOARD MEMBERS

**President:** Douglas Vitarelli, [asifaeastpresident@gmail.com](mailto:asifaeastpresident@gmail.com)

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**Board Member:** Candy Kugel

**Board Member:** Ray Kosarin

**Board Member:** Bill Lorenzo

**Board Member:** Christi Bertelsen

**Junior Board Member:** Hugo Segal

**Junior Board Member:** Ronan Madden

**Intern:** Katelynn Duarte

**International Coordinator:** Douglas Vitarelli



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[https://www.instagram.com/asifa\\_east](https://www.instagram.com/asifa_east)

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June 2024



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I moved to the East Village in the late 80's when I was beginning my animation career and the wonderful film *Robot Dreams*, set in NYC and directed by NYU grad Pablo Berger from the graphic novel by SVA grad Sara Varon, brought back a lot of fond memories. While it's nice to be nostalgic of the good times, inevitably the not so good memories come back. And that made me think that the 20's, like the 80's, aren't easy.

I bring this up because with the emergence of AI, news like the closing of UArts and doomscrolling on LinkedIn, I'm thinking about our community and how the next generation of NYC animators will thrive.

For artists like ourselves to survive here we've always had to have a tenacity and independent streak. Those characteristics force us to push the boundaries of our creativity to advance the art form and lead to continued success.

And I don't believe that I'm alone in this thinking. Read the many interviews on our website to see how that spirit is alive and thriving right now.

And whatever your definition of success may be, I'd like to share this Instagram post by Elliot Cowen ([elliottelliot.com](http://elliottelliot.com)) because for me it succinctly explains why we do this.

Edited for clarity

- In a few days we'll be on the 10th anniversary of my tiny independent feature, *The Stressful Adventures of Boxhead and Roundhead*.
- Making the film was very stressful. The budget was miniscule and I had work and kids to juggle while in production. It had a healthy festival run but gave me no industry cred of any kind.
- Which honestly, I was expecting but was hopeful something else would have come from it. Hard to scabble industry cred on a film made mostly at the coffee table for 80g.
- So how do I feel about it 10 years later? Pretty much the same. It looks very much like a film made at a coffee table for no money.
- But it looks like mine. It looks like I made it. You can't mistake it for anyone else.
- As wobbly as the production values are at times I like the film I made at the coffee table with my 80g more than most other massive budget animated features.
- And it touched a lot of people. They still reach out occasionally. If you care to, you'll find it on Amazon Prime. Give it a look. Still appreciate reviews.

At our festival last month we saw many examples of this type of success like Alba Enid Garcia-Rivas' lush *Dangerously Ever After*, the impeccable craft and dark humor of Patrick Smith's dark humor and the warm graphics of Hoda Ramy.

I think NYC's animation present and future is in good hands.

# INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

By Doug Vitarelli

With the Anney International Animation Film Festival and Animafest Zagreb both happening in June it was a time for ASIFA International members to meet in person to discuss the upcoming year.

The ASIFA International Postcard Exhibition, promotional postcards, designed by 24 members from across the globe, were distributed at both festivals. These colorful postcards showcase the diverse artistic approaches of our global membership.

ASIFA International Members are invited to submit their artwork for the second edition of the postcard exhibition. Go to <https://asifa.net/asifa-international-postcard-exhibition-2024> for details.

The update of the website, ASIFA.NET, is in the works. The plan is to give all members access to create their own pages. Go to <https://asifa.net/members> to get an understanding of what the plan is. The Members of the ASIFA Executive Board agree on the calculation and believe, that this improvement will be very helpful in reaching ASIFA's aim of building cross-cultural contacts.

Lastly, ASIFA-East member and (my) RISD professor Amy Kravitz is profiled on the International website and is, with permission, reposted on our website.

## FESTIVALS

**The Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF)**, one of the world's leading animation events, runs from Sept 25-29, 2024. Experience the legendary event for yourself to get inspired by innovative animation from around the world, participate in special events, and make new connections in the animation industry.

ASIFA-East members receive a \$20 association discount off the price of a festival pass (AnimaPass, TAC AnimaPass, or TAC & OIAF 3-Day Pass). To receive the discount, enter the discount code ASIFAeast24 at checkout. Your discount can be applied on the Early Bird rate which ends Jul 23, 2024.

Travelling to Ottawa for the Festival? For more information on hotels and travel availability and discounts visit the OIAF website. To learn more about passes and place an order head over to the box office.



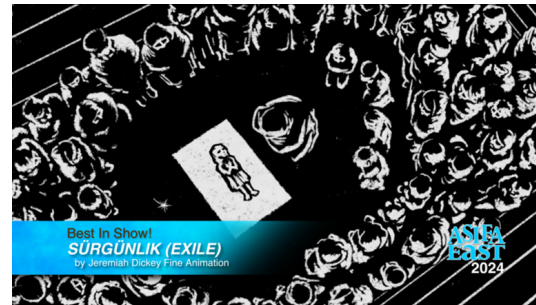
## EVENTS

# 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Animation Festival



On Thursday, May 23 at the Museum of the Moving Image in Queens we held our 54th festival.

The Peggy Award went to **Sürgünlik (Exile)** by Jeremiah Dickey.



Doug Vitarelli



Tristian Goik, Emily Compton



Emmett Goodman, Joy Buran, Candy Kugel

The six-day event began with an opening ceremony on June 3rd followed by a kickoff party. Student films, children's films, and shorts were screened and judged throughout the festival. Animafest Scanner XI, a series of panels that introduced the latest research in animation, provided many moments and insights worthy of continued thought and discussion. A panel on AI in animation proved especially thought provoking (if not controversial) As well as presentations on queer animation research by Jeremy Speed Schwartz, early animation devices by several researchers (including yours truly) and a particularly compelling panel on the role of editing in animation. The ideas presented initiated conversations that would continue throughout the week in the bars and cafes that adorn the city.



Bill Plympton introduces 'Slide'

Our own Bill Plympton arrived a bit jet lagged on June 5 to screen his latest feature, 'Slide,' in the main theater. Bill was surrounded by fans and admirers for whom he signed postcards and answered questions late into the evening. Other luminaries included the legendary Barry Purves who, along with Plympton and Naomi Van Niekerk conducted mastclasses on the last day of the festival. Animated shorts from around the world played throughout the week, and a retrospective of work by Phil Mulloy featured prominently.

ASIFA International President Deanna Morse provided updates on the various ASIFA chapters around the world and connected people with similar interests and did the work of the consummate ASIFA ambas-

sador.

Overall, this year's festival was a tremendous success and a great deal of fun. It was wonderful to connect with so many animators and friends old and new during a week of high energy, inspiration, and astounding work.

For more information on this year's event as well as photographs, lists of films and award winners, visit [www.animafest.hr](http://www.animafest.hr).

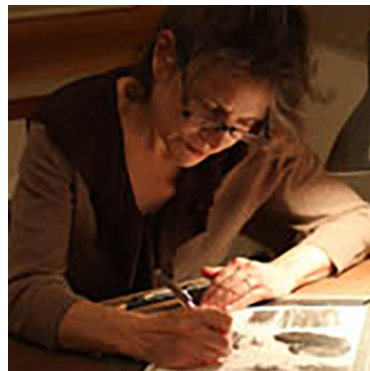
## INTERVIEW

### Amy Kravitz: Monochrome Monarch

By Keltie Duncan

"Many films are 'about' a topic, and have a message to deliver, or a story to tell. My films don't embrace that approach. My intention is to create a non-verbal, visceral experience – an experience that transcends words. You have to understand the experience with your body, rather than with words."  
– Amy Kravitz

Reprinted in full on our website courtesy of ASIFA International Website, Keltie and Amy.





Andy London, Patrick Smith, Jacob Kafka



Liz Van Verth, Anna Samo



by Robby Gilbert

**Craft Awards**

Craft Award: Excellence in Animation	<b>Pour Generation</b>	Patrick Smith
Craft Award: Excellence in Design	<b>Dangerously Ever After</b>	Alba Enid Garcia-Rivas
Craft Award: Excellence in Writing	<b>Love, Daddy</b>	Kevin Bauer
Craft Award: Excellence in Sound Design	<b>HORANGI</b>	Lynn Kim
Craft Award: Excellence in Education	<b>MetKids Create: Why Do Pennies Turn Green?</b>	Lisa LaBracio

**Independent Films**

1st Place	<b>Onward Ye Costumed Souls</b>	Patrick Smith
2nd Place	<b>Tennis, Oranges</b>	Sean Pecknold
3rd Place	<b>GUO</b>	Kaleb Mu

**Commercial**

1st Place	<b>Once Upon a Tree</b>	Dan Marsh/ <i>Hornet Studio</i>
2nd Place	<b>MetKids Microscope: Are Bookworms Real?</b>	Lisa LaBracio/ <i>The Metropolitan Museum</i>
3rd Place	<b>Cuisine Exchange</b>	Yves Geleyn, Michael Thurmeier/ <i>Hornet Studio</i>

**Experimental**

1st Place	<b>Hemorrhage</b>	Ruth Hayes
2nd Place	<b>Practice Makes Practice</b>	Jeff Scher
3rd Place	<b>A New World</b>	David Ehrlich

**Music Videos**

1st Place	<b>A Better Life</b>	Jeff Scher
2nd Place	<b>In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning</b>	Hoda Ramy
3rd Place	<b>The Drunk Driving Song</b>	Dave Wolfe



Lisa LaBracio, Bill Plympton

**Student Films**

1st Place	<b>Slap the Deck</b>	Erim Cetinel/ <i>School of Visual Arts</i>
2nd Place	<b>Bunny to the Moon</b>	Akira Maynard, Sammy Liu, Justine Fong/ <i>Savannah College of Art &amp; Design</i>
2nd Place	<b>Catch &amp; Release</b>	Maggie Gee/ <i>University of the Arts</i>
3rd Place	<b>Night Market</b>	Chenyi Zhu, Xinyu Sun, Yingyu Zhu/ <i>School of Visual Arts MFA Computer Arts</i>

Animators from around the world gathered in Zagreb, Croatia this past week (June 3-7) to view films, attend masterclasses, absorb the latest research, and enjoy animated conversation in the warm, summerlike weather in one of animation’s most storied cities. Since its inception in 1972, the World Festival of Animated film has been held in Zagreb, making one of the oldest animation festivals in the world—second only to Annecy. Zagreb is also home to Zagreb Film, the legendary studio known for its unique approach to animation. The studio is still in operation today, and behind its graffitied doors some of the most well-known animated shorts were created. The locals are keenly aware of the rich history of Zagreb animation—both the good and not so good—and many of the artists are held in high esteem by a knowledgeable population.

For those who have not yet visited Zagreb, perhaps the city can best be described as fragrant (the blooming of the Linden trees), visually compelling, and richly textured. Zagreb experienced two earthquakes in 2020 from which it still bears the scars, cracks, and broken windows that give a sense the magnitude of the destruction. The city is rebuilding though. It’s a safe city, and the people are warm and welcoming. Zagreb claims a sense of mellow authenticity which is, compared to more tourist-heavy European destinations, quite relaxed and refreshing. Graffiti abounds but somehow its colorful and tastefully executed and adorned with the unique cartoon approaches for which Zagreb is known. It is a remarkably beautiful city in which to hold a festival.



ASIFA International President Deanna Morse with Robby Gilbert



Barry Purves being interviewed

**Doug: Did you have any creative input into the film? For instance, was there ever a question about changing the ending or adding dialogue?**

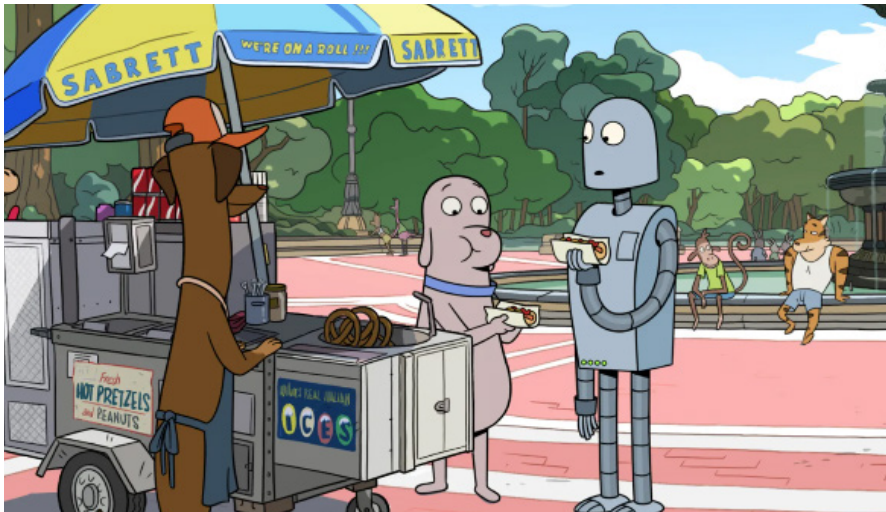
**Sara:** I didn't have much creative input, but we met in person in 2018 and Pablo talked about his vision for the film, and it all seemed like it would work out well. He said it would be 2-D, which was really important, and he said he'd more or less keep the storyline, and he talked about his creative influences, which were in line with mine. He sent me the script for the movie, and he sent me an early trailer, and I visited the animation studio in Spain. And I sent him my graphic novels and picture books as they came out, and updates on the other things I was working on. So there was an open line of communication. I loved everything he was doing with the project - I'm not what would've happened if I disagreed with a choice he made, but fortunately, that was never an issue. But I also understood that it was going to be his movie, so I was prepared his choices to be a little different than what I might make and that was always fine with me.

**Doug: Are you happy with the final product?**

**Sara:** Absolutely. Like I said before, I don't know how it could've been better. I feel incredibly lucky how it all worked out - it was like a gift.

**Doug: How much ownership do you feel you have on the film? and does it matter?**

**Sara:** Somehow, now that it's out, I feel a little bit of a claim to it, even though I didn't do much work on the film. (I just did a little concept art in the beginning and a little bit of hand-lettering here and there.) Pablo and the production company have been super nice to me - I've gone to openings with the team and they invited me to the Oscars, which was amazing. They definitely made me feel like I was part of the family of people working on the film.

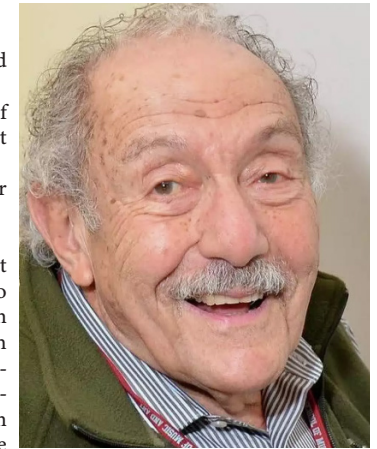


# Remebering Dick Rauh

By Ray Kosarin

This past year, ASIFA-East lost a beloved leader and friend. On October 9, Dick Rauh, our second and longest-serving president, died at the age of 98. Our ASIFA-East Animation Festival would not exist without him; Dick loved the festival and, for over two decades, his was the face that presided over this event.

Dick was kind, a leader, a mentor. He was both an artist and successful business owner. It is a special person who can be president of an animation union and then open his own studio and stay friends with everyone. With sadness and overwhelming gratitude, ASIFA-East honored our friend Dick at this year's ASIFA-East Animation Festival, with memories of Dick contributed from our ASIFA-East community, past and present. We share their words with you now, including a few which time prevented our sharing during the event.



Dick Rauh

**Howard Beckerman:**

Dick Rauh was the man to go to when leadership was required. He became president of the East Coast Animation Union, Local 841, and the president of ASIFA-East for many years, building the organization to a substantial meeting place for artists, independent filmmakers, and animation devotees. The long running ASIFA-East Animation Festival was created in the early days of his presidency. Through those years, he was a savvy partner of the successful optical effects firm, The Optical House.

Shortly after Dick became president of ASIFA-East, he turned to me at a meeting and said, "Howard, why don't you prepare a program on a specific topic, such as animation and music." I did. It went well and Dick told Boone Mancall the publisher of the trade magazine "Making Films in New York." Boone asked me to write an article based on my lecture and used it in his magazine. I eventually received invitations to write for other periodicals. I did additional programs on animation subjects for ASIFA-East and for other organizations. This began, for me, a half century of writing and teaching. Thank you, Dick. Dick Rauh was the guy to go to.

**Candy Kugel:**

Dick was always a great supporter of independent animation and regularly attended the Ottawa International Animation Festival— one of the few "studio bosses" to go. Dick then went back to school and became a PhD in botany illustration. He began to teach classes himself at the New York Botanical Gardens.

ASIFA used to meet at the Optical House every month and then Buzzco Associates took over. I once asked Dick, how did you get to stop hosting the meetings? He said, "Went out of business!"

### Linda Simensky:

I took over as president of ASIFA-East after Dick, and there was a gigantic gap to fill. He'd been president for a long time, and he was certainly beloved. He knew everyone and everything, and I was in awe. What made me feel better about taking the position was that it allowed Dick to finally retire from ASIFA and get busy being a grandfather and learning botanical illustration, which he was working on at that point.

Several years later, a friend of mine who was not an animator, gushed to me about an amazing course she was taking in botanical illustration. She couldn't say enough about how amazing her teacher was, how inspired she was and how much she was learning. I offered to lend her my botanical illustration book filled with Dick's illustrations, and it turned out she had it already because he was her instructor. I appreciated the coincidence, but I wasn't surprised. I was excited to learn that Dick was having just as much impact in his second career as he did in his first.

### JJ Sedelmaier:

I first met Dick while sitting in on Local 841 Union meetings and negotiations in the early/mid 1980s. Even though he was a big guy, he was one of the most gentle, sensitive, and rational humans around, and certainly in attendance at any Union Meeting! Later, I went from sitting on the member's side of the table to joining the Producer's side of negotiations while I was at The Ink Tank. Again, I always knew that Dick would be the rational source in any discussion. A lovely man with a great sense of humor too!...

From 1984 to 1988, I worked with Dick's Optical House [on] many groundbreaking projects. There was no one better to creatively and technically strategize with. I doubt we'd have been able to accomplish HALF of the work we did back then without his participation and support — AND encouragement!

When I found out that he'd retired and had become a botany illustrator, I couldn't wait to see his artwork! It was a sight to behold!

R.I.P. my friend... with love and condolences.

### David Ehrlich:

This gives me an opportunity also to thank Dick Rauh, who passed away in October at the age of 98. In those early years, Dick was president of ASIFA-East but, more than president, for me he was a kind of father figure: always helpful, supportive.

That first festival in 1976, almost 50 years ago, I got a prize for a film in the Non-Sponsored category. At the end, Dick said, "Want a ride?" "Yeah." I was staying at my brother's, down in NoHo. I got in the car with Dick, Howard Beckerman, Tissa David; we had fun driving down, 10 or 15 minutes. As I got out of the car, Dick put his hand on my shoulder and said, "David, I hope to see you again next year with another beautiful film." That meant so much to me, as did my friendship with him through the years. Thank you, Dick; thank you, ASIFA-East, for almost 50 years of friendship and support.

ASIFA-East is forever grateful to Dick, for his immeasurable role in building ASIFA-East and, especially, for his enduring kindness.



Dick Rauh with June Foray, Ottawa Animation Festival, 1976

Photo by John Canemaker, 1976. All Rights Reserved.

For a few years after Dick stepped down from being president of ASIFA-East, we had an annual summer picnic at his house in Connecticut. With this photo from the early 90s, you can see us having a fun time hanging out and celebrating another ASIFA-East year gone by. We always appreciated heading out of the city to Dick's house and it's fun seeing photos of so many luminaries of NY animation. —Linda Simensky



Standing, left-to-right: Steve Dovas, John Dilworth, Jerilyn Mettlin, Ronan Divon, Howard Beckerman, Bill Lorenzo, Tom Warburton, John Gati, Mary Ann Japhe

Seated, left-to-right: Ray Kosarin, Suzanne Diamant, Janet Benn, Linda Simensky, Candy Kugel, Shamus Culhane, Simi Nallaseth, Dick Rauh, Iris Beckerman

## 4 Questions For Sara Varon

By Doug Vitarelli

Sara Varon's graphic novel *Robot Dreams* was recently turned into an animated feature. Because it's set in NYC, I had a few questions.

**Doug:** The novel's setting is ambiguous but the movie is set in NYC in the 80's. Since you attended SVA around that time, do you feel that it was a successful interpretation of the place and time?

**Sara:** Yes, I love Pablo's choice to set it in NYC! I arrived in NYC in 2000, and spent all my time in the East Village during my first few years in NYC. The neighborhood was definitely changing but it had a lot of that same flavor as the East Village of the 80s and 90s. And yes, it's absolutely a successful interpretation of the place and time!! I can't imagine how it could be better.



Sarah Varon with Sweet Pea