

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 our film festival, which debuted in 1969, is the oldest animation-only festival in the US.

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September 2024



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When I joined ASIFA-East I'm pretty sure it was the only NYC animation game in town, although I will defer to the animation historians about the veracity of this. But that's not the case anymore. Now there are many others, each occupying their own place in the world of animation and it's very exciting to have so many opportunities to view animation and meet fellow artists.

Now what if some of those orgs got together for one event so their fans could meet other fans? It would be big. It would take a day or more. It would have to have name tags for everyone. And it would be cool if it was completely free.

I bet a good name for this event would be **New York City Animation Weekend**. It would start with **Animation Speak/Easy** in Park Slope Brooklyn on a Friday night and then head up to **Hostos Community College** in the Bronx all day Saturday with screenings by **ASIFA-East** and **Animation Nights New York** and a panel discussion called *AI and its Influence on the Animation Community* by **Women in Animation NY Chapter** and finally an open screening to show your work in progress to get some feedback from your peers.

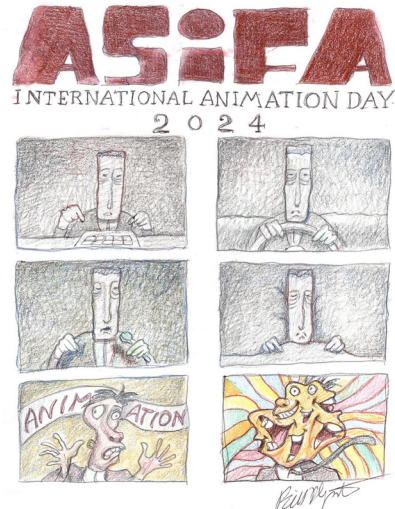
#NYCAnimWknd is the fruition of another goal of my presidency, to bring as many of us northeast animators together for an event to have fun and meet lots of other animators that we might not necessarily come in contact with.

The dates, October 25th and 26th, were decided on because they're very close to **International Animation Day**, a day honoring the birth of animation, recognized as the first public performance of projected moving images: Emile Reynaud's Theatre Optique in Paris, on the 28th October 1892.

Besides NYC's most prestigious animation organizations, there will be many people to thank for this once it becomes a reality but we couldn't have gotten this far without Andy London, Yvonne Grzenkovicz and SUNY Fredonia animation student and ASIFA-East summer intern Katelynn Duarte, so a big thanks to them.

Being that this is the first iteration, we're still ironing out details so stay tuned for more information on our socials.

Looking forward to seeing you there.
Doug



NEW YORK CITY ANIMATION WEEKEND



ASIFA-East presents **NYC Animation Weekend**, an event where NYC's most prestigious animation organizations come together to present programs and offer a place for animators and animation fans to meet, be inspired and enjoy animation.

ASIFA-East will present the **International Animation Day** program, a compilation of some of the best independent animated films from around the world.

They will also host an **Open Screening** where animators can screen their works in progress and get feedback from their peers.

Animation Speak/Easy will invite three artists to each share an animated short that inspires them, followed by a lively, audience-driven discussion.

Animation Nights New York (ANNY) will screen a program of curated international animated short films. Animation Nights New York is a monthly screening event and annual festival based in NYC. Since 2015, ANNY has presented high caliber animated short films from all around the world

The New York chapter of Women in Animation will host a panel discussion on AI and its influence on the animation industry.

So come and join us Oct. 25th in Brooklyn and Oct. 26th and 27th at **Hostos Community College** in the Bronx for a weekend of animation.

Be sure to follow our socials for more details.

INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

The ASIFA Board has awarded **Sayoko Kinoshita** the 2025 ASIFA Prize.

Sayoko has been making independent animation documentary shorts together with her partner Renzo Kinoshita, such as “Made in Japan” (’72), “Japonesse” (’77), “Pica Don” (’78), “The Last Air Raid- Kumagaya” (’93), “Ryukyu Okoku – Made in Okinawa” (’04), receiving Grand Prix and many international prizes. Also, since late 1960s, she has been working for the development of animation art, including education, research and promotion. In 1985, she founded the first international animation festival in Asia, in Hiroshima, endorsed by ASIFA, and has been the Festival Director since then. ASIFA President from 2006 to 2009.

UPCOMING EVENTS



A Celebration of Legendary Animator, Jim Simon

A native of Harlem and a graduate of the School of Industrial Art, Jim Simon owned and operated WANTU Animation, one of the first Black owned and staffed animation studios in history. Jim Simon began his career at Paramount working alongside Ralph Bakshi. He opened his own studio creating spots for Sesame Street, Electric Company, and Vegetable Soup and he contributed early designs for Soul Train. He also developed The Brown Hornet character for the Fat Albert Show. After winning several ASIFA East awards in the late 1970s, Simon moved his company to Los Angeles where he went on to head up overseas production on numerous shows for companies such as DIC. Jim Simon is a master artist and animator, and a true legend in the story of New York animation.

We will celebrate his career with a talk by the artist and screenings of his films.

See our socials for tickets.

Oct. 11 at 7pm

**School of Visual Arts Graduate Center Screening Room
136 West 21st Street**

DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE AS AN INTERNATIONAL ANIMATOR WITH MULAN FU

A conversation with Siz Wang

Every school has a talented upperclassman who is told as a legend over lunch breaks. Mulan Fu is that legend in the 2020s at the NYU Animation Area.

I started college in the year of the pandemic, so I never met her when she was still in school. I couldn't recall how exactly I came to know Mulan. She almost sounded like a fictional existence. We probably came across each other online at some point. Over several years of observations, I developed an impression that, regardless of how many words people use to praise her youth and accomplishments, Mulan is humbly putting herself on the more friendly and responsive end of the approachability spectrum.

NYU invited Mulan back to campus for a presentation and Q&A session last year. Though we moved all our chairs into one classroom, they still got outnumbered by her fans. Many were eager to learn how she found resolutions to artistic dilemmas not taught at school. Students wanted to borrow her secret recipe for animation career success. How did she discover her unique art style while others still struggle with imitations? How did she find her internships and jobs in a more-than-ever competitive market? How did she acquire such a large fan base on social media? Those were the central questions on people's minds. Mulan responded upfrontly. She is generous not only to her audience but also to aspiring artists seeking advice.

When Doug asked me if I would recommend any candidate for the aNYmator column, I immediately thought of Mulan. As an independent animation director, Mulan has won a handful of awards at international film festivals. Her clients include Hornet, Condé Nast, Amazon Prime Video, Coca-Cola, and the NYC Department of Education. Mulan previously worked at Pearl Studio and is now a creative producer at HoYoverse.



Knowing how quintessential independence is as a fellow international student, I sat down with Mulan for an intimate and in-depth conversation. This interview is conducted with the hope that our discussion may shed some light on the young artists who are just feeling a little lost figuring out their future plans.

Hi Mulan, Thanks for coming. This interview is us, ASIFA-East, getting to know you, hopefully by having a deep conversation about your experience studying and living in New York City as an animator. We have a newsletter called the aNYmator, except we replaced NI with NY for New York. It's just a zine focusing on discovering local animation filmmakers who are relatively established in their careers. We would like to share your experience with a wider audience.

Awesome. Thanks for the intro. It's an honor.



Stray Cat Ah Q (2019), by Mulan Fu

Yeah, that's the background information. Now, my first question would be, can you give us an introduction of yourself?

Of course. My name is Mulan. I wear many hats. I'm a 2D animator, director, and creative producer. I have worked as a director and an animator across multiple jobs and personal projects. I'm currently a creative producer at Hoyoverse, the game studio behind Genshin Impact and Honkai Star Rail. I primarily focus on creative development and creative production of 2D animated content specifically for Genshin Impact, but I also have never stopped making personal films. I still work as a 2D animator on my personal projects, and I pretty much do animation every day. So, yeah, that's me. I live in New York. That's good.

How did you discover your initial interest in animation? Did you find out in childhood or college?

I can trace it back to kindergarten. I found my earliest piece of fan art to be from kindergarten. It was a really poorly drawn childhood doodle of Princess Mononoke.

I have a Mononoke poster in my study. I don't know if you can see it, but it's over there.

Yo, that's huge. That's awesome. I can't name a time when I didn't love animation. Animation has always been a huge passion for me. It was my go-to thing to do during my leisure time. I enjoy going to anime conventions, looking at cosplay and manga, buying merchandise, and that sort of anime lifestyle. I didn't really ever consider being in the industry

But I noticed that since last summer Roblox integrated AI into its Studio app. So I tried to do the same thing and while it didn't work the first time, it eventually did. For that and for about 20 other scripts until I finished. I FINISHED!

It was quite the journey. Since my games of choice are Wordle, Scopa and Bocce, I learned a lot about first person gaming, had to make a lot of creative decisions based on the limitations of the platform, the power of AI and much more.

And now that that door has closed, another has opened. Well, more than one. There are many improvements that I want to make and it has to be marketed to get users to play in the hopes that it becomes popular for distributors to notice. There is a YouTube channel "Surviving Animation" by animation executive Eric Calderon that I like because he has some solid advice on methods for that.

After writing this I think my things to do pile only got bigger so I might as well start now...

"Olifant Wants To Go Home", a game to help a dinosaur return home is now on Roblox!

We would love to spotlight your work!

Just send us a max 500 word description with an image we'll publish it.



Still from "February" in *Last Year...*, an animated short by Emmett Goodman.

The project is the result of Emmett animating one second every day of a whole year exclusively on an iPad.

WORK SPOTLIGHT

by Doug Vitarelli

My pile of unfinished projects just got a little bit smaller.

Last spring I read an article on Cartoon Brew about how the online gaming platform Roblox is a place for both creators and distributors in the animation ecosystem. Since I've wanted, and still want, my own animated series, I did some research because all I knew about Roblox was that a former colleague worked there.

It turns out that it's ridiculously popular with kids under 13 with over 30 million active users daily. And it seemed simple enough to use for someone with my skill set: 3D animation. But there was one catch, any personalization, of which I would need a lot of, has to be coded and I can't code.

Luckily I have a son who's an engineering student, has played Roblox, can code and had time during summer break to help out. Unfortunately he decided that his friends and girlfriend took precedence over helping the world's greatest dad. And so, even though I made a lot of progress with the models, textures, environment, etc., before I had to return to work, the game began to gather cobwebs along with many other projects.

When my son returned from school this summer I tried again to get him to help out. Again, no luck. But he suggested trying ChatGPT. So I signed in, prompted it to create a script to open the oven door when touching the door handle, copied the code and pasted it into Roblox and absolutely nothing happened.



until middle school when we got to explore more artistic mediums in interest groups and art classes. That's when I finally got the chance to explore what animation really is and how it's done. I started by making little flipbooks on the corners of a textbook or something during class, and then I made little clay figures and did little claymation by myself. That experience was super enjoyable to me. It was the trigger and motivation for my further animation exploration in high school and finally in college.

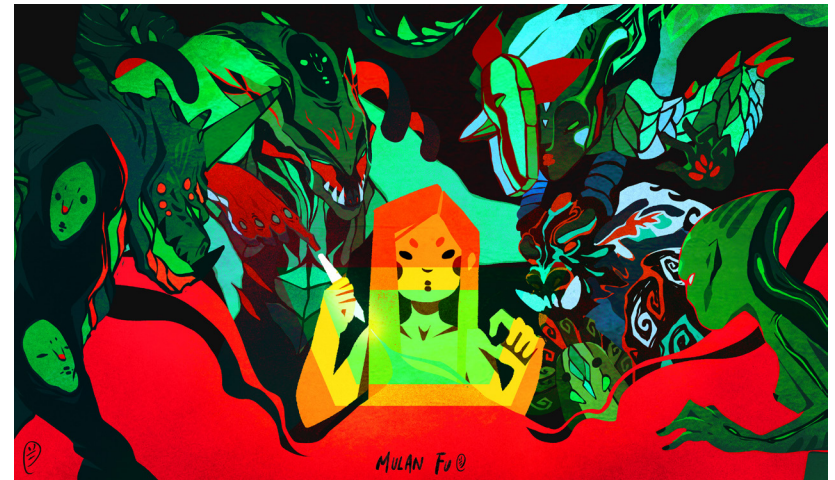
When I went to NYU, I chose film as my major, but I basically focused on animation as a concentration and finally started making my own personal animated shorts. There was nothing that really held me back. The shorts were something that actually made me care more about the craft and more interested in the world in general. You know, we can see a lot of really, really cool boundary-breaking visual styles in short-form animated content. From TV, to features, to advertisements, I just really loved all of these different animation formats. So, in the pretty early years of college, I decided animation was where I wanted to be professionally, and yeah, here I am.

So, it seems like animation has always been a calling for you, and it's not something you need to think really hard about.

Yeah! It's a fun story. Though I don't know if this is a coincidence, destiny, or if my parents just kind of predicted it, my original name was not Mulan. I changed my legal name to Mulan when I was three years old. At the time, I watched Disney's Mulan 2D film almost ten times a day. One day, I just turned around to my mom and asked, "Why can't I be called Mulan?" My mom checked those Chinese fortune-telling books to see how good that name was. Then, my parents were like, "Whoa, this is big fortune!" So, they happily changed my legal name to Mulan.

What was your name?

My original name was Fu Xin, so like Xin Fu (In Chinese, reading this name backward would make it sound the same as the pronunciation for "happiness.")



Ah! I remember when I first heard your name when I got into NYU, I immediately thought of the Disney film Mulan. Here is an animator called Mulan? That's strangely coincidental. I wondered if it had anything to do with the film.

It has everything to do with the film. Every time I think about it afterward, I wonder if that may be the calling or something. But yeah, I love the name. I love the film. I love animation.

That's awesome. That's a mystery solved for me. It has been on my mind for maybe 5 years. Without thinking, you know that you want to be an animator, but what was your initial vision of yourself becoming an animator?

I didn't really have a vision. I just wanted to be in the industry and make cool things. I want to make cool animations. Wherever that brings me, I will go. However, I did have a clear vision of how I wanted to plan my life around whatever career I might have. I wanted to make sure that I had enough personal time and that I could keep the drive to create independent projects aside from whatever job I wanted to do. That's something that I wanted to make sure when I was job hunting and actually working.



Journey (2017), by Mulan Fu.

That's excellent high-level thinking.

Thank you. It derives from actual experience. When you work - even if you're working in an industry that you love and creating things that you love - you will always work on things based on other people's commercial interests. Especially in corporations, there are a lot of restrictions and work-related politics to take into consideration. Everything like that can make the work-life balance a little bit more complicated. I always make sure there's at least something I'm doing with my time that completely belongs to me and not to a company, or a brand, or something equivalent.

No, it's not. It's basically something that stems from the doodles that I created during COVID-19 about human interactions on social media. I've always wanted to explore that topic further. I wanted to create some longer content about humans and technology. I think a lot of studios are tapping into the same genre right now, such as DreamWorks making the Wild Robot. Some studios made some human-machine-dynamic films decades ago. We're getting back to that topic.

My final question would be, is there anything that you are currently struggling with? In our entire conversation, we have mostly been talking about your insights, about the more successful part of you. But as a human, is there anything that you are currently struggling with?

Yeah, I would say the biggest thing is that I'm too far away from my family. My parents are in Shanghai. My entire family is in Shanghai and China. I'm the only one hanging out in the other hemisphere, so that's something that I am struggling with. I really enjoy being in the city. I think that's something I would have to find a solution for eventually, within a few years. I think a lot of my peers, especially international students or third culture students are also experiencing and struggling with the same thing. Whenever the Chinese New Year comes, when everyone is celebrating, and I notice that I'm the only one who's away, it feels kind of sad, so I hope I can find the perfect balance between family and my personal goals.

Good luck with that! Thank you so much for disclosing everything we talked about in today's interview and for making the time.

FIGURE DRAWING

Thursday, Oct. 24 at 7:30 pm

Titmouse Studios

150 W 30th St, between 6th and 7th. 10th floor



Yeah. We just have to embrace it. Speaking of your career and your graduate program, having a full-time job in a game production company, how does this day job affect your animation practice? Does it help?

I work for HoYoverse's branding and marketing team, creating animated content to promote the games. That's the essence of my job.

It is a pretty linear experience stemming from my animation practice because now I'm still kind of the animation person. I basically came up with the creative direction, the art direction, and the script for the animation projects that we are making at HoYoverse, and I see it through execution as a producer.

So, my day job didn't take me away from animation. It actually got me closer to the actual day-to-day execution of animation projects. It's a lot of fun because I get to work on the shorter-form projects. We get to work with crazy talented and stylistically adventurous animation studios to develop and invent new styles that you can't necessarily put into a pipeline for a longer form, but you can experiment with super fun stuff in short form. That's something we get to do with game promotional content.

That's good to hear. Thank you for clarifying. I think I'm going to ask this next question for a lot of our peers, like people around our age, though maybe some people who are more advanced in their careers also have the same struggle. The question is, nowadays, in and out of the animation industry and in the broader entertainment industry, artists are expected to have a solid social media presence, and a lot of us struggle with it, but you seem to have a pretty broad audience on social media - Do you mind sharing a little bit of your trade secrets? How do you grow your account and sustain attention?

One thing was, during COVID, everybody was on their phone. And two, I was posting very frequently, pretty much every day or every other day. That was the only thing that I can trace to that I think contributed to my social media followings. I have no idea about anything else involved in planning your content and maintaining attention on social media.

Content-wise, I think it's really just up to the artist. I really don't think you should cater whatever you're drawing or creating to the social media platform because that kind of breaks the purpose, though I do think posting frequently is pretty important

Let's talk about your short film. I know you are cooking up a new film right now. Can you tell us anything about it, or is it confidential?.



Okay, so your initial goal was to be able to balance your personal life and your commercial work life. Did you encounter any challenges throughout the journey? Has your vision ever changed, or do you ever doubt it?

Yeah, all the time, especially working in my current role as a producer. I must stay on top of all the deadlines and countdowns across multiple productions. It can definitely eat into your energy.

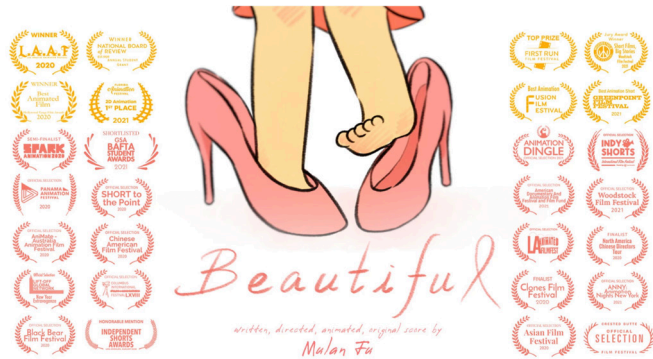
It takes a lot of self-control and clarity to set boundaries to maintain your work-life balance. Nobody else is going to help you plan your day, tell you when to stop working, or tell you to stop thinking about your job. You have to be the actual person figuring out your personal life. I prefer to keep two hours of relaxation time a day to work on my projects and do hardcore animation for my film. The major obstacle is when you get up from your desk after eight or nine hours of work per day, you still need a way to maintain your drive. You must learn to relax, lie down, and take a breather. Then, your brain can whip you to sit back up again to work on your personal project. Self-monitorization is the hardest part.

You sound strongly independent, but did you ever have a time when you felt you needed external help? Was there anyone you can think of in your life or in your career journey who has been instrumental to you?

Immediately, my parents, because they're both artists.

They're not animators, but they're both artists in the film industry. This is in the blood line, I guess. They're both basically freelancers for life. They both know how much work it takes to get creative work done and also how difficult it is to trust yourself and hold on to something that's completely creatively yours.

I have many conversations with my mom, especially because she's an actress. We discuss character performances, scripts, and storylines. One of my short films is also inspired by her.



Beautiful (2020) by Mulan Fu.

“Beautiful”?

Yeah, exactly.

I think the relationship and the kind of creative competency I can have with my mom make me basically worryless. I don't have to care about whether the idea is mature enough, the concepts are solid enough, or my progress is satisfactory enough because she's not my client or my boss. She is my mom. She wants my personal creative work to be done more than I do.

So a lot of times, when I'm super burnt out from work or whatever and lose that drive to spend extra hours during the day working on my personal stuff, she's always the one who checks in and asks, “How's your film going? Are you making progress?” It can be pressure from another perspective, but I really appreciate it.

That's a very sweet and motivational family dynamic. Speaking of your personal art, from my perspective, you have a particularly bold and visually metaphorical expressive art style. However, that's how I describe your art style. How would you personally describe your art style? How did you develop any cultural or non-cultural style?

I think you just summarized it quite correctly. Those are the keywords that I get attracted to when I look at other artworks, like bold colors, bold brush strokes, and metaphorical motifs. Those are things that I really love seeing in other people's artworks as well.

Culturally, a hundred percent. I get a lot of influence and inspiration from Chinese mythology and just mythology overall.

There was a time period, especially during high school, when my entire bookshelf was just packed with books about spiritual interpretations of things in concrete behaviors or symbols.

I think it was around the end of my college years that I really solidified this style, which was when we were diving right into COVID. I graduated college in 2020. And that was the COVID year. The world was chaotic. Everybody's plan was screwed up. Nobody had a plan. The world turned upside down. A lot of things are happening. A lot of things, personally, professionally, everything.

We were forced to spend a lot of time in our own minds, and I think many people experience this. We were forced to interact only with the world online, on the internet, which is a very chaotic place. The Internet can be very helpful and inspiring, but it can also get extremely toxic sometimes.

I remember seeing some of your personal art from the time, like a picture of a girl getting devoured by a phone.



Yeah, I can speak to that, too. I think that contributed to my motivation. It felt natural and cathartic to make those little doodles to express my feelings toward some of the behaviors and things I observed. Later on, it developed into this sort of style that I kept. I think those are the two major inspirations if not trigger points.

So, going back to your career, you established a pretty solid career early on. What was your thought process in terms of career development? Did you have a clear blueprint, or was it a free flow?

I had no idea about my career. I think that's especially true about students in art school. We just have no concrete idea what the world outside is like because we didn't know the art world is a lot more relationship-based, network-based, and experience-based. And then also because, once again, I graduated with COVID-19, and COVID-19 changed the film industry completely. Even if I had a plan back then, it would get thrown out of the window.

I was really lucky to get an internship at Pearl Studio in the creative development department, which is something that I really, really enjoyed working on. Creative development is a super early stage of the feature film development process. I think it was towards the second year of graduate school that I started working full-time at Pearl Studio doing precisely that. Starting from there, my career was a free flow because I didn't know what the world would turn out to be. COVID changed a lot of jobs and companies. Some companies just vanished, while some other new companies came out. I think where I want to be in terms of my personal life has changed and shifted since, which then impacted my professional career planning, but most of it was really just following the flow. We cannot predict our own future, after all.