

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.

BOARD MEMBERS

President: Douglas Vitarelli, asifaeastpresident@gmail.com

Secretary: Liz Van Verth, secretaryasifaeast@gmail.com

Treasurer: Emily Compton, asifaeasttreasurer@gmail.com

Social Media Director: Emmett Goodman

Festival Co-Chair: Tristian Goik, asifaeastfestival@gmail.com

Festival Co-Chair: David Eisman

Technology Manager: Emily Compton, asifaeast.webmgr@gmail.com

Board Member: Josué Agustin Advincola

Board Member: Christi Bertelsen

Board Member: Ryan Castrillo

Board Member: Ray Kosarin

Board Member: Candy Kugel

Board Member: Bill Lorenzo

Board Member: Ronan Madden

Board Member: Hugo Segal

International Board Member: Douglas Vitarelli



FIND US ONLINE

<https://asifaeast.com>

https://www.instagram.com/asifa_east

<https://twitter.com/ASIFAEast>

<https://www.facebook.com/asifaeast>

<https://asifa-east.bsky.social>

February 2025



Table of Contents

- President's Message
- Artificial Intelligence
- TraceLoops
- International Report
- Upcoming Events

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's been a busy month for animation during this awards season here in NYC which means that, if you're a member, there's been a lot of free animation to go to. We've had the opportunity to see the latest Wallace and Gromit feature, *Vengeance Most Fowl*, the new Looney Tunes feature, *The Day the Earth Blew Up*, at the Crosby Hotel (never, never ever miss a chance to see a film at the Crosby), the Oscar shortlisted animated films on The Animation Showcase, *The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim*, *The Colors Within* at the Japan Society and *Dog Man* at SVA. Plus the largest animation festival in the US, Animation First, at L'Alliance New York which hosted the latest Animation Speak/Easy. And Animation Nights NY held their 101st program.

If there's a thing such as too much animation, this January was it.

This issue showcases two opposites.

The first is Artificial Intelligence, a technology that's having and will continue to have a seismic effect on the animation industry. The cover image happens to be an AI image. It was generated in Adobe Express by pasting the first paragraph of Eve Leonard's article (based on her presentation at NYC Animation Weekend) into the prompt. I then took the first nine options and laid them out.

The second is an interview with TraceLoops, the pseudonym of Matthias Brown, an independent, experimental animator living in Brooklyn. He is a modern day Norman McLaren, constantly experimenting with new materials while creating beautiful work.

We are busy preparing for our 55th festival and there are lots of international events being planned for ASIFA's 65th anniversary, so stay tuned for more months of too much animation.

And have you seen our updated website? A huge thank you to Emily Compton for all the backend work in making that happen.

Lastly, we've joined the social media app Bluesky. Be sure to follow us there if you're on it.

Doug



UPCOMING EVENTS

Vermont Animation Festival

Submissions to the Vermont Animation Festival are open!

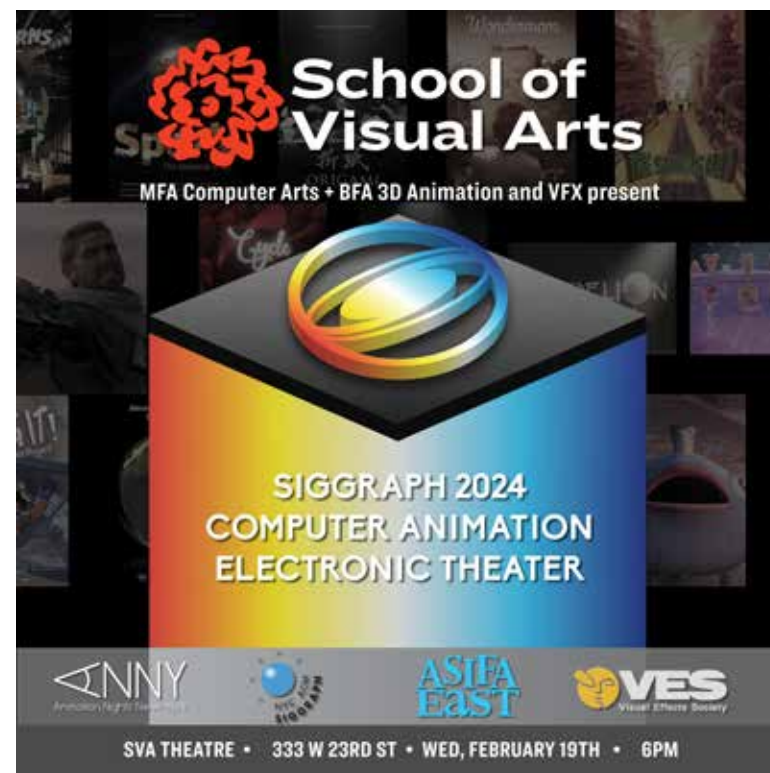
The Vermont Animation Festival was created by SAS member Robby Gilbert and is currently celebrating the 10th year of offering workshops and screenings at the Vermont State University - Lyndon campus. Although we screen submissions from both emerging and experienced filmmakers, The VAF is especially friendly to students. If you could take a few minutes to encourage your students to submit their work, we would greatly appreciate it.



Info and submission form here:

<https://www.vtanimationfestival.org> (<https://www.vtanimationfestival.org>)

Free event!



UPCOMING EVENTS

US & French Student Short Film Competition

Animation First, the largest animation festival in the U.S., celebrates its 8th edition. As part of its programming, the festival highlights emerging talent through the US & French Student Short Film Competition, which showcases animated short films—both 2D and 3D—created and produced by students from eight schools across both countries. SVA is proud to co-present this free screening, which will be divided into two parts with one intermission, in collaboration with Animation First. We invite everyone who shares a passion for animation to join us!

Date: Saturday, February 8

Time: 2:00 PM - 4:30 PM ET (Doors open at 1:00 PM)

Location: SVA Theatre (333 West 23rd Street, NYC)

RSVP: [Here](#)

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/student-film-competition-screening-at-school-of-visual-arts-tickets-1198048698909?aff=oddtcreator>

Participating schools: Gobelins, l'École de l'Image (Paris, France), RUBIKA (Valenciennes, France), École Emile Cohl (Lyon, France), École des Nouvelles Images (Avignon, France), California Institute of the Arts (California, USA), Savannah College of Art and Design (Georgia, USA), School of Visual Arts (New York, USA) and the University of Southern California (California, USA).



ANIMATORS IN THIS CULTURAL MOMENT

by Eve Leonard

***Note - AI tools were not used writing this article.**

The artist's role in society is responding to and defining culture throughout civilizations. Right now, the world is in a moment of significant disruption because of technology. This disruption is nothing new to animators. Sound disrupted silent films. Digital disrupted photochemical processing. 3D disrupted 2D. Animators found a way to adapt and respond.

The greatest difference between then and now is that new tools are being developed more often than they are being implemented or mastered, using artificial intelligence (AI). Animators are greatly concerned because of the potential loss in process. The process of making an animated film is long and complicated. Animators make millions of decisions by balancing the scope of their ideas with the limitations of their medium. Often, this process inspires creativity through problem solving things like budget and time. For some animators, limitations in the creative process spark the muse into action.

This paradigm shift has created an imbalance of power. Artisans with the wisdom of experience are respected less in our industry than people who have access to the latest software. Animators can reclaim societal balance through an interdisciplinary approach to their work. The only way animators can make informed decisions is to learn how these tools can benefit and derail the creative process.

Creatives often mistake their worth to be defined by their craft. A technical artisan holds value in their innovative techniques. A director and/or writer holds value in their perspective and wit. These areas a computer can never replicate -although, a talented salesperson may try to manipulate this fact. In order to participate in this cultural moment, I advise everyone in our industry to test AI tools and find inspiration in collaboration.



The trick with the testing process is to have a concrete goal. Answer the question: “How will this workflow improve my work?” Then, research AI tools to identify which tool will best support your goal. Create a test project using your current creative practice. Document how the artificial intelligence tool can be used to support or replace steps in your practice. Include your thoughts and feelings in the documentation. When the test project has concluded, discuss your process with your peers. Repeat this process with any AI tool that you are interested in using.

Collaboration is beneficial for animators who already have a set routine. It is the healthiest way to maintain our creative community by encouraging mentorship and communication among artists with different perspectives. Find an artist in your professional network who is inspired by AI. Reach out to this artist by suggesting a collaborative project as a way to expose yourself to AI tools without training or use. Identify a goal for the collaboration. Assign tasks on the project. Then, repeat the documentation process above.

Instead of being overwhelmed with existential dread, this moment could be an opportunity for self reflection for everyone involved in the creative industries. Understanding your core value/identity as an artist will help you figure out how new methods of practice can support or hinder your creative output. Approach these methods with curiosity and participate in conversations with experience and facts. We are contributing to industry chaos when we parrot the fear and promise of AI without proper experimentation for ourselves.

Written by Eve Leonard
ASIFA East Member

Co-Lead for Women in Animation NYC Chapter
Acting Assistant Chair for Digital Arts Pratt Institute
Associate Professor

FIGURE DRAWING

Thursday, Nov. 27 at 7:30 pm
Titmouse Studios
150 W 30th St, between 6th and 7th. 10th floor



Is it difficult to make a living?

Yeah. A lot of those people that I know do a mixture of things. A lot more brand work, for instance pop-up events that wanted to have something interesting, lighting or an installation sort of thing. Like Dave and Gabe. They have a space out in Bushwick and were doing a lot of installation-based spaces or making a large LED screen that are site-specific. That sort of deal. But with the lockdown a lot of that work was gone and they started developing a game show that's a live gaming experience that incorporates elements of a buildout and having an interactive thing. But it makes sense.

Also, with sales using social media things, you just sort of gotta always be promoting it.

I was going to add, as far as process techniques and that sort of stuff, at art school I was often the most mathematical person in the art space or the most artsy person in the math space.

Well, thank you very much.

Oh yeah, definitely, definitely appreciate it.

INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

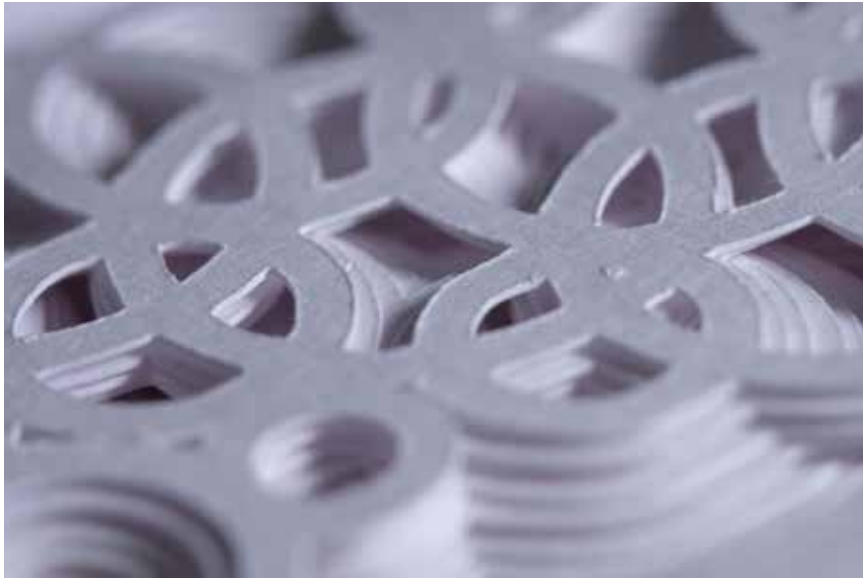
This year is the 65th anniversary of ASIFA, founded in Annecy, France in 1960. It was founded to envision a world of peace and dialogue to settle our differences, with the art of animation serving as a bridge between different cultures and ideologies. Working with UNESCO, ASIFA strived to unite the animation world in peace by trying to find ways for animators from both sides of the Iron Curtain to meet in person. The main goal of ASIFA was to share animation films and develop lasting international friendships.

Board members from all over the world are voting on a number of activities and initiatives that will be a part of the celebration, such as: Logos and Merchandise, the ASIFA Festival Award, an anniversary video, a party at Zagreb, and an Academic Forum at Mostra.

ASIFA-East voted YES to the proposed budget.

Continuing initiatives will be:

- International Animation Day, which we celebrate as NYC Animation Weekend. Croatian animator Lucija Mrzljak designed this year's poster.
- ASIFA Academic Magazine. The newest edition has 8 fantastic articles, including one Ottawa International Animation Festival Creative Director Chris Robinson.
- Postcard Initiative Exhibition
- ASIFA Student Award



Do you know any other artists like you who you go have coffee with in a record store in Brooklyn?

There are some folks but some have moved since COVID. It's people that I would go to see when Tumblr was more active in having events and we would meet through those spaces. It's people who are focused on animation similar to mine or people who are just curious about the process.

I have a friend, Zolloc, that's his handle. Did a lot of Cinema 4D. My friend Sam Cannon, who has a photo background. Those are people that I met through Tumblr and then continued keeping up with them. And in Jersey City, there's a studio complex/art storage space called Mana Contemporary. They were figuring out a little bit of their residency program with some traditional stuff and we were able to be tacked on because we work largely in digital spaces and so they didn't have to commit as much physical space to us as a group.

It was Hayden, Sam. Thoka Maer-she does Google Doodle stuff, and is closest to me in style because she would do hands on animation, but it wasn't as experimental. Then Julian Glander, who recently released a feature-length film that he pretty much just did by himself called *Boys Go to Jupiter*.

Is that the guy in Pennsylvania?

I think he's in Pittsburgh now. He was in Sunset Park for a minute before I moved here. He's somebody who does more experimental but jokey sorts of things, with a more comedic, friendly sort of look.

And it's a lot of talk about whatever is affecting whatever we're working on. It's changed over time- now we're focused on the platform.

MATTHIAS BROWN, AKA TRACELOOPS CURIOUS ABOUT THE PROCESS

A conversation with Doug Vitarelli

I learned of Matthias, a modern day Norman McLaren living in Brooklyn, because, not surprisingly, an experimental animator's account from Brooklyn found its way into my Instagram feed. He regularly posts work that is both handmade and digital and can be appreciated not only for aesthetics but purpose, inventiveness, craft, and poetry.



Can you just give me a quick background? Where did the interest come from?

I would say I've always enjoyed watching animation and cartoons, but my first foray into experimenting or using animation in any form was probably a one-week long summer course that was at a school that my mom was connected to as an art teacher.

And how old were you when you went to this camp?

It was fifth grade, maybe. A lot of learning how to do very basic animation. And I don't know if it was a practice at the time to be as destructive with the editing process, but there was a lot of copy and paste and layers for Photoshop and Macromedia Flash.

I did Flash animation through high school, but maybe more graphic design, because I came to the understanding that being an animator was being a small part of a very large team, and that wasn't the most appealing to me creatively.

And so I continued on the graphic design route, went to SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design) in Atlanta and got a BFA. And while I was there, I started using Tumblr. At that time animated GIFs were gaining in popularity and they had a little bit more freedom artistically, and because there was enough bandwidth, you could push that a little bit further than just a tiny thing, or a flashing sort of animation.

And I started doing a lot of glitch work, like taking video and data and mashing it when you use a compression format. That was interesting. And then I started doing some rotoscoping (didn't know what it was called), and that's where the name TraceLoops comes from, because I was tracing and making looping animations.

Oh, I love it.

And I didn't want it tied to a format, so I rotoscoped black-white things for two reasons. One was fewer materials. And two, if you're working in a digital space, it's understood you have to deal with color correction on screens or the variation between colors. So on different screens, when it's just black or it's white or a grayscale, there's no correction needed, so you don't have to focus on a screen that might lean more yellow, more blue or whatever.

And then file size. Using animated GIFs and limiting your color palette is very helpful in being able to use dithering to fill in the textures, as opposed to individual colors, and it limits the file size, because file size was a necessary thing for that platform. And so while I was in school I started doing that and got a little bit of brand work on the tail end.

And this thing was something that could be animated as a single individual, making something that I felt like I had both the creative and the work control, that I had the creative direction, but I also got to work on the things physically. And just have sort of continued with that. I'll also say that during my senior year, I took a history of film class and that's where I first saw work by Norman McLaren. And that was a real good fit for me.

That's a good point. I totally see you as McLaren-like. So are you from this area?

I'm from North Carolina originally, but grew up around the south.

I'm just curious why you moved to New York.

I graduated from college, and my dad is a pastor at a church in Jersey City and the church has housing they provide for the pastor, a four bedroom house. And so I was living there for a while until I moved in with my now wife, a few years ago, to Sunset Park.

I checked out your website, Patreon, Instagram and TikTok accounts, store and a YouTube channel. You have to have like a thousand videos.

I was doing live-streaming for a bit while. It was just a daily task and worked well for personal work incrementally, with small goals along the way. Also did some Instagram live streams at some point. I found that it's a good way to stay on task.

minutes of animation or whatever sort of works.

I can really see your work at BAM, like in the background of a Philip Glass and Robert Wilson opera, or something like live visuals for concerts. You have...?

I did some work for Beck earlier this year.

You did?

Totally, it was through an artist in Scotland, Jimmy Turrell, who does a lot of print-making stuff. He's done work with Beck in the past and, for the tour, they were looking for some things and he reached out. It was a mixture of licensing, some existing work and doing some things to sort of fill in gaps.



How do you post regularly? How much time is put into the creative part and how much the social part in an 8-hour day?

It's figuring out a way that works. There's a Bill Gates quote, "If you have a tough project, you give it to the laziest person because they'll figure out the easiest way to do it". And I enjoy finding efficiency in whatever sort of thing.

Some things take more time. When I'm on a project I won't post on that, because it's the thing that gives me money. So then I'm posting the other things.

I liked one of your pieces where you use a Pixel Press.

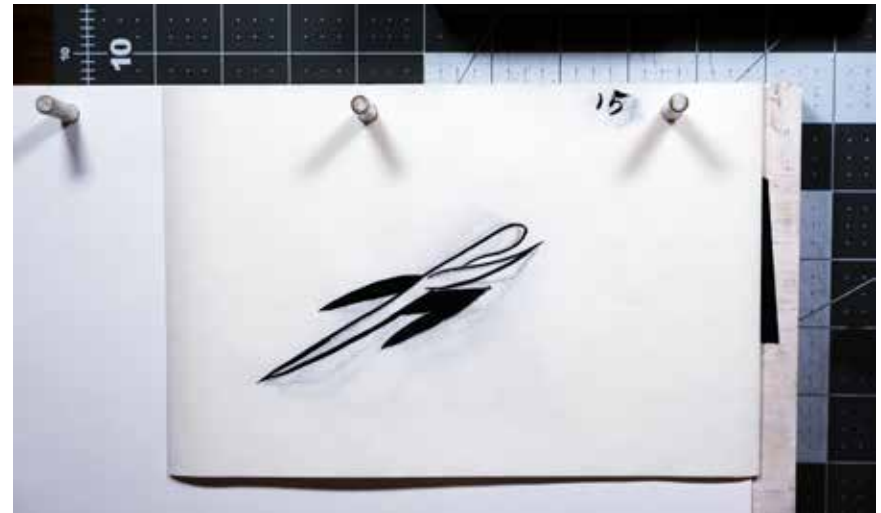
Yes, Pixel Press. It started out slow and then, once I got into repetitive movement, it went really fast. And the results on that are wonderful. Thank you.

For that editing style, part of it is understanding how video games teach you how to interact with something. It's slow, easy, and then repetitious. And as time goes on, you just have it as almost like a muscle memory.

So all your stuff is short and experimental and obviously you're doing something right. Well, obviously you're doing a bunch of things right. But any thoughts on doing larger format pieces or things more complicated?

I've done up to a couple minutes but it's not narrative. I don't know that I have a strong skill set for character animation or something like that. I've done some things that are longer form, but usually it's workaround, a cheat or something where it's modular and it builds out in time.

I do have some personal things that are longer form, but they're loops that build into each other or build larger and so it keeps your interest. But it's really maybe 30 seconds of animation that's made into like five



Some have fallen off, but I'll start back up at some point. It's a good way to keep accountability for yourself.

And also when streaming, it's much harder to like, diverge and go work on something else or go not work on something else.

Yeah, I understand. There's always laundry that can be done. How did you make the jump from school to being this? Can you tell me about that journey?

While I was still in school I was making more short animated GIFs and submitted some to (I forgot the exact name) Art Week Miami. It was curated and I think (not 100% sure) that one of the people on the selection panel was Michael Stipe from R.E.M.

I think he might have been the judge that selected the one I just had pixelated, a joke GIF that was a transition/dissolve of Thurston Moore from Sonic Youth. His face was filling the frame and then a pan down, and he was tiny, and it said Thurston Less.

So that was co-hosted by Tumblr and then the Brooklyn Academy of Music wanted to have a selection playing for their outdoors billboard, maybe around 2013, but in order to show it at a different location they had to get permission from me. So someone reached out from Tumblr and I said, "I'll be in the city during break and it would be nice to meet you" and asked if it was okay to put me forward for band work. So that got me some connections to the first brand work that I did, a few animated GIFs, for Converse's Music Tumblr.

I put all the frames on the side of the sneaker, and then photographed it so that you see the sneaker rotating and the little animation of the guy. And I did a few other ones that were just sneakers dancing.

Then I just continued working on my own through different channels and distributed.

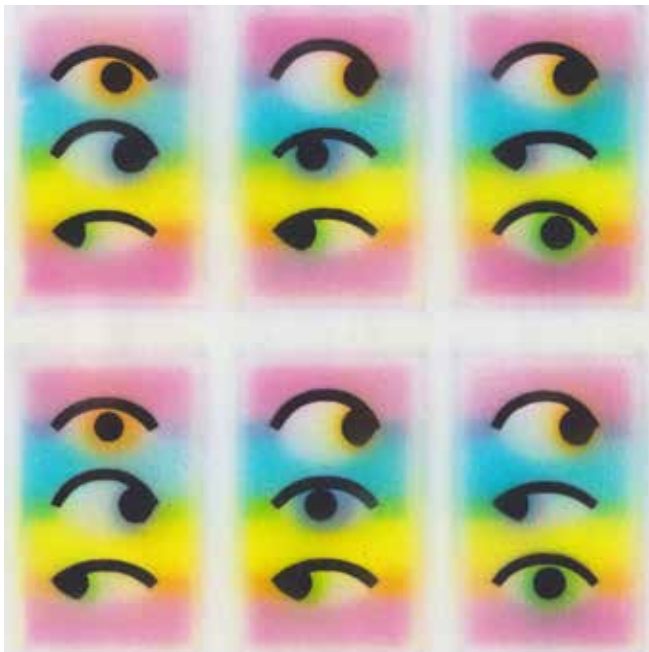
You're really DIY, very tactile. I like the drill press that you have. And I just saw recently on your Instagram that you're using a Cricut [computer-controlled cutting machine]?

Yeah, I have a Cricut and I'll use that for things that are tedious or really impractical to do by hand. I've been using it for geometric animations where the change between frames and the precision of it all sucks to cut out by hand. Even if I were cutting out by hand, it would look bad because the changes need to be consistent and precise. For any machine or process, I like there to be a reason I'm doing it that way, so the Cricut is real nice for grids and circles, triangles and squares, waves and lots of small pieces to cut.

You're working with shadow, you made a zoetrope and some embroidery. Where do the ideas come from?

I am really interested in how things work, and how something functions, and I'll see that a thing has an interesting element or I'll have done some work with the material in the past, and I just want to have a better understanding of how it works. I'm trying to think of the cutouts I had done, some cutout things that were focused on shadow a while ago, that it was just like some dancing figures from folded paper. And I like seeing how something works and trying to use something in a way that can't be done otherwise. Which sort of goes back to some of Norman McLaren's things, like there's just a simple idea or a facet of something that really can't be done otherwise.

I got the Cricut at some point, and that was a big catalyst for doing more cutout animation. It's really just curiosity about a function and maybe getting a tool and



And with the paper, initially I wanted to have a structural item, like taking a three-dimensional form and cutting it into a bunch of slices, kinda like 3D printing, but stacks of cut paper. But when I first cut out pieces of paper, it wasn't enough slices to create a 3D form. However, when I lowered my light source and cast a harsher shadow, there was a feeling of depth in the photos captured. That light, having the strong shadows, really gave it a sense of physicality and scale.

Part of that comes from a graphic design background where it's a fine balance of information and extraneous information and simplifying something to where your understanding of it is as instant as possible, but not excessive. And I'm curious about that as a thing.

Do you have a favorite piece, one that makes you say, "Damn, that looks great"?

I really like the music video that I did for Fiona Apple because it was a culmination of things and a larger task to take on because it's a three-and-a-half minute video. And my weird 15 frames per second, which is an awkward thing for software, that comes from rotoscoping digital footage, means that my sense of motion is different than a lot of the animators that I know.

A lot of the times, it's whatever is the more recent sort of thing because that's where the focus is. I do find that there are things that I made in the past that I was really excited about in the moment and now see what I would consider the shortcomings of it.

And there are things that I didn't like that I do like now, because they was a more unique approach to it. And maybe I didn't like the outcome, but I like the idea and so I can revisit that. It's harder to revisit something that I liked in the moment, because it was maybe something more resolved.

So how much commission work do you get?

It ebbs and flows.

Sometimes it'll be several things or a larger project for a month. I've learned not to expect to have a project, but to pace out work.

Has it always been natural for you to post on social media?

It's something that I more or less grew up with, I was sort of on the cusp of it. I wasn't big on watching YouTubers do that sort of thing but went to a lot of Macromedia Flash sites, things that had these one or two small teams that developed games and animation, stuff like that. MySpace was my first foray into that and then at college I was focused on Tumblr, which I still use today and enjoy it. And then Instagram, when they started focusing more on video.

It's what you're comfortable with. There are people who are much more aware or build up more personality, which isn't bad, but it's not for me to be like that all the time.