

## 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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December 2024



**ASIFA-EAST CONGRATULATES  
ANIMATION NIGHTS NEW YORK  
ON THEIR 100TH SCREENING!**

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Well, it's been another month of great animation events.

The memorial for NYC animator Howard Beckerman was attended by multiple generations of NYC animators who saw Robbie Gilbert and Tommy José Stathes present some wonderful artwork, including a great selection of handmade cards, animation produced at his studio, a documentary of him teaching and his personal film from 1984, Boop Beep. Also his daughters brought a plethora of Howard's drawings, free for the taking. I picked one and in Photoshop I took a bit off the top and added a goatee and now I have a portrait of myself by Howard!

As Bob Coar wrote in Cartoon Research,"in New York City's animation history, [sic] all roads lead to Beckerman" and thanks to the internet we will always be able to find what he said and did. What sadly can't be replaced is the opportunity of being able to walk up to someone at an ASIFA-East mixer with that institutional knowledge who would happily impart stories, advice and encouragement.

At the Japan Society our members were invited to meet Bronx-born LeSean Thomas, one of the few Black Americans working in the anime industry in Japan.

L'Alliance New York, formerly FIAF, the organizers of the Animation First festival (coming in January), had a viewing of (the incredible) "Flow" with director, composer, editor and producer Gints Zilbalodis present for a q&a after the screening.

And on Tuesday the 19th in a bowling alley/bar in Brooklyn, Animation Nights New York (ANNY), founded in 2015 by Yvonne Grzenkowicz, had their 100th show. Congratulations Yvonne and here's to the next 100!

And if that wasn't enough, the one and only king of independent animation Bill Plympton offered free tickets to his latest feature "SLIDE" at the SVA Theatre. Bill has done it again, animated a feature film all by himself. Is that 6, 7, 8? I've lost count. What I do know is that I really, really enjoyed "SLIDE" and "Duckville", the short that preceded it.

And (can you believe there's another and!) The Animation Showcase is streaming, besides its usual amazing offering of films, the features "Memoir of a Snail" and "Chicken For Linda" for a limited time.

And now I'm exhausted.  
Happy Holidays.  
Doug



# FIGURE DRAWING

Thursday, Dec. 12 at 7:30 pm

Titmouse Studios

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

*This date is tbd. Check your email for confirmation.*



# INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Did you know that if you're an International member you can see just released or not yet released films for free during award season in private screening rooms in NYC?

Simply download the FYCIt (For Your Consideration) app and when creating a profile make sure to select ASIFA- International Animated Film Association as your guild. When RSVPing, make sure the screening recognizes ASIFA.

We have a supply of official membership cards that can be used as proof of affiliation for entry. Just email [asifaeastpresident@gmail.com](mailto:asifaeastpresident@gmail.com) if you'd like one sent to you.



FYI, for many years I've gone to these screenings with a friend who is in the cinematography guild as his +1 and they rarely ask for a membership card. Not saying you shouldn't bring one but just saying...

# FILM SPOTLIGHT MARKET OF HATE

by Candy Kugel

Candy is the longest-serving member on our board of directors. Her bio alone could take up an entire aNYmator issue so if you don't know, or would like more, go to [www.buzzco.nyc](http://www.buzzco.nyc).



## Synopsis

Kugel made “Market of Hate” as a cry for compassion, the need to resist the powerful forces that promote fear and hatred and create divisions to increase their power and wealth.

Recalls Candy, “It began as a whisper in March 2023. I woke up with a whispered warning—lyrics for a new film. Longtime collaborator Lanny Meyers wrote the music. This whisper turned into a full-throated shout after October 7th and I kept amending it until it was finished in March 2024. And current events keep making this, sadly, even more relevant.

Then I tried submitting to various film festivals and discovered that asking for peace and love had become controversial-- they didn't want anything that smacked of politics, and asking folks to band together to fight the forces of divisions became just that, even though it wasn't taking any side in the world-- just asking us to figure out who profits from this and how we might work together to vanquish the hate. I felt like Cassandra, whose message about the future was unheeded.

The Woodstock Film Festival came to the rescue! It had its world premiere there to a very receptive audience and was nominated as a finalist!”

# ANIMATION SPEAK/EASY

BUILDING AN ACCESSIBLE ANIMATION COMMUNITY IN NYC

## A conversation with Siz Wang

*Between 2022 and 2023, words spread in town about a mysterious speakeasy event for animation lovers. I cannot recall how the message was passed on to me, but the mystery alone was enough to incentivize me to take the train to a specific bar in Brooklyn on a windy Wednesday night.*

*There's a sense of surreality about the buzzing and joyous atmosphere in that bar named Rullo's amidst chilly NYC winter. In J.K. Rowling's novels, a world of wizardry is concealed behind some mediocre London walls. In reality, somebody built a community for animation hidden in the plain sight of a quiet NYC neighborhood. Pushing open the door of Rullo's, I almost mistook myself for Harry Potter, who had just discovered the secret pathway into Diagon Alley for the first time.*



*It was a long and narrow bar, dark and rustic. Bulky jackets and woolen scarves overlaid on top of each other on a wooden coat tree near the door. Beer and cocktail glasses glimmered with the chatters. “Welcome back to the world you belong” was the non-vocalized message that saturated the air with warmth.*

*As the bar became more overflowed than ever, the masterminds finally emerged from the crowd, revealing themselves next to the small bar table under the spotlight at the inner end of the bar - Andy London, Anna Samo, and Lisa LaBracio. The three of them all had distinctive haircuts. One of them was bald with a huge mustache. Another kept an edgy cut, brushing all her curly hairs to one side. The final seems to walk out of an elegant vintage movie poster. What might these styling choices reflect about their personalities? I wondered. Their choice of venue, invitation of guests, and contrast of characteristics collectively kindled my curiosity for who they are, why they are organizing this event, and how they become a team.*



*I later moved around the city twice in less than two years, but going to the Animation Speak/Easy, this inclusive screening and discussion event that introduces three different artists with their beloved animated shorts every time became a bi-monthly routine of mine that hasn't changed since. We slowly got to know each other a little better over time as the three hosts made sure that they engaged in conversations with the people attending their screenings.*

*Three is a perfect number of people to embark on an adventure. It allows enough possibility space for ideas to echo and evolve among the party, but also enough intimacy to accept affirmations with disagreements. This interview is a story of the Animation Speak/Easy trio's friendship. What they have learned from the support they give to themselves and received from other generous friends and teachers they've personally encountered in the industry. Their appreciation of people they have met drives them to put more people in connections with each other through hosting animation-focused events. They have established a balance between their vision for education accessibility and their ambition for a sustainable community. The following interview will share with you what they think about their journey.*



#### **Can you give us an introduction of yourself respectfully?**

**Andy:** My name is Andy London. I am an animator, a filmmaker, a comic book artist, a graphic novelist, and an educator. I run a program in CUNY. I have a commercial studio called London Squared Productions. I am a co-founder of Animation Speak/Easy.

**Lisa:** My name is Lisa LaBracio. I am from New Jersey, but I moved to New York in 2002. I am a freelance animation director who spent most of my career at TED-Ed. I teach in the SVA BFA Animation and MFA Computer Arts Departments. I'm also a co-founder of Animation Speak/Easy.

**Anna:** My name is Anna Samo. I was born and raised in Russia. When I was 26, I relocated to Germany and studied animation in Potsdam. Years later, my husband, children, and I moved to the United States. I am an independent animator working on my films, but I also occasionally teach animation workshops. I am also a co-founder of Animation Speak/Easy.

"At the very beginning of my career in the animation industry, I worked as an assistant animator to Tony Eastman (Tony had been previously mentored by Lou Dorfsman @ CBS). I didn't even have a disc or lighted drawing table to work on. Tony loaned me an extra disc as well as a wooden drawing lightbox! Willis Pyle's drawing lightbox! I only



met Willis once and took great pride in being able to thank him for his assistance in launching my duties in the industry!"

The music for "Birds" was composed and performed by Arnold Black. Arnie was a world renowned violinist who had studied at Juilliard and had a marvelous career on multiple levels despite having had cerebral palsy since birth. By 1977, Arnie had become Blechman's composer of choice until well into the 1990s, and created soundtracks for clients like PBS, IBM, Perrier, Frito-Lay, WQXR, and Northern Trust Bank.

The spot became a classic and garnered multiple awards from various festivals including The Art Directors' Club. In 1984 I began working at Bob Blechman's animation studio, "The Ink Tank" as an assistant animator. I had done stints at most all the other studios in NYC after my start with Tony Eastman in 1980. But Blechman's The Ink Tank was different than all the other facilities. It specialized in sophisticated little projects and worked with some of the top designers in the art and illustration worlds. On top of that, I would be working near the guy who did that "CBS "Birds" spot! I was in heaven. By the end of 1984 I was moved up to producer and within another year, I was Executive Producer/Associate Director. By 1990, it was time for me to leave and start our own studio with my wife Patrice. But one of the last projects I worked on at The Ink Tank, was a project for CBS. They were issuing a special edition VHS videotape for the 1990 Holiday Season. It was an episode from the old "I Love Lucy" TV series, a special Christmas episode from 1956. As a bonus, the producer at CBS, Ken Ross, wanted to include "Birds" as a part of the package. They still had the original 35mm OCN (negative) and wanted us to retransfer it to D-1 videotape - I jumped at the chance to do this! To end my stay at The Ink Tank this way was a true honor!



JJ and RO Blechman

# BIRDS

by J.J. Sedelmaier

Thanksgiving has just passed and now comes the rapid onslaught of the Christmas and holiday season. The onslaught of ads and marketing across all means of communication will relentlessly pummel us until the beginning of the New Year. Yet from 1966 until well into the 1980s there was a charming respite from all the noise, that gently floated into our lives if you happened to have had your television tuned into the CBS television network.

It was called **"Birds"**, and this is its backstory.



Lou Dorfsman was a graphic designer and the On Air Art/Promotional Director at the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), "The Tiffany Network". Lou had been there since the close of WWII and was drawn to the company because of the high graphic standards at the corporation. In one way or another, Lou became responsible for the image branding of the network, covering everything from on air promotion, to the hiring of William Golden and Kurt Weihs who created the iconic CBS "Eye" logo.

In 1965, Lou approached R.O. Blechman to consider coming up with some ideas for 60 second on-air Christmas "Season's Greetings" spots. Lou and Blechman had been friends and mutual admirers for years prior. At 23 years old, "Bob" Blechman had made a big splash in 1953 with his book, "The Juggler Of Our Lady", which was animated as a short Cinemascope film with Boris Karloff narrating, by Terrytoons (eventually a CBS-owned company) in 1957. Since then he'd become a well respected cartoonist, designer, and editorial illustrator. He'd also designed TV commercials that were often animated and produced by Elektra Films, a stellar animation studio that specialized in translating print designers' work into film. Bob proposed two concepts. One involved a little girl going up an escalator to visit Santa Claus at a department store, whispering in his ear, and leaving the store wearing his oversized red coat. The other was titled **"Birds"**. <https://vimeo.com/191655843> This brilliantly timeless and charming piece became a CBS network holiday season staple for over 20 years, and something that from the time I was 10 years old, came to eagerly anticipate each and every year.

"Birds" was animated by Willis Pyle. Pyle had an impressive career at Walt Disney Productions working on the films "Pinocchio", "Fantasia", and "Bambi". From there he had a stint at Walter Lantz's studio working on "Woody Woodpecker" cartoons, then to UPA where he helped create "Mr. Magoo" and Ted "Dr. Seuss" Geisel's Academy Award winning, "Gerald McBoing Boing". His remaining years were spent as a bi-coastal freelance animator working for everyone from Richard Williams to studios like Elektra.

**It seems like all three of you have teaching experiences and are involved in animation education. Are there any common sensibilities that you discover and share?**

**Lisa:** I think we all want the younger generations to have access to community. We also want them to realize that you don't have to work in TV or in feature film animation to be an animator in the U.S. You can make animation independently.

**Anna:** Yeah. All three of us are really passionate about independent animation. All three of us were influenced by someone in our younger years. I think it's very important that we provide an opportunity that helps everyone share and exchange experiences.

**Andy:** To reiterate what they are saying, I also like to expose people to things they wouldn't ordinarily look at. That's a big part.

**I think that's the kind of generosity many aspiring filmmakers or junior animators are looking for in their predecessors. Okay, so back to you guys as a group. How did you guys first meet each other?**

**Andy:** I think I met Lisa at SVA around 2004 or 2005, maybe?

**Lisa:** I thought we met through Bill first.

**Andy:** Did we? We might have met through Bill at a party.

**Lisa:** I worked with Bill Plympton here in New York for five or so years. Bill was really generous. He brought us to every screening and told us about everything happening in New York. I think I met Andy and Carolyn that way, and then we got to know each other better at SVA. I often went to Andy while teaching, especially in my early days. Andy and I have similar ideas about not teaching theory as much as teaching action and problem-solving, so he has been a big influence on my teaching.

**Andy:** Yeah, and we also briefly worked with each other when I was freelancing for TED-Ed.

**Anna:** Switching to my perspective, I met Lisa first. It was a screening at MoMA with Richard Williams in 2015. I didn't know anyone when I first came to New York. I wrote to the only two people I knew back then, and Signe Baumann got back to me. She was at the same screening, and she introduced me to Lisa.

**Lisa:** In a very Signe way, she said, "Anna, Lisa, why don't you talk to each other?" And then she disappeared.

**Anna:** Then, I visited Lisa at TED-Ed. We had coffee and just talked about animation. That's how we discovered that we were on the same wave. Thanks to TED-Ed, we had an opportunity to make a film together in 2019. It's called The Opposites Game. One night, Lisa and I went to a screening at Nitehawk organized by Willy Hartland that included our films, and Andy was there. I finally got to meet Andy after hearing from Lisa about him for years.

**Lisa:** Yeah! I was like, "It's absurd that you don't know each other. You guys liked each other's work so much."

**Anna:** That's how it basically started. From there, we had a summer visiting museums and sharing dinners at my place.

**I see. For Andy and Anna, it's like fictional characters coming into real life. My next question is, how did you all develop the idea of Animation Speak/Easy?**

**Lisa:** It was the summer when the restrictions were lifted, but we were still working remotely.

**Anna:** Yeah. When the pandemic hit, everybody went into their own little caves. After the pandemic, in May 2022, I traveled back to Europe because I was on the jury at the ITFS Stuttgart. Revisiting the film community there made it clear that I felt lonely and that I needed to change something in my life in America. So, when I returned to New York, I told Andy and Lisa, "Guys, I feel there is this vacuum. I think we really need a place for creative exchange." This is New York. There are people in New York. We just didn't know them.

The idea of Animation Speakeasy's format was borrowed from another animator, Tess Martin. Tess is originally from the US but lives and works in Rotterdam.

She told me about an event called Manifest that she was organizing in Rotterdam. It had this format of inviting three people to talk about animated shorts that inspired them. She'd been running this event for seven years. She told me, "Please take it and take it to another city; do your own thing out of it."

So, in 2022, when we decided to start something similar to Manifest in New York, we just needed a name. At some point, Andy said, "Yeah, it should feel like a speakeasy." That's how Animation Speak/Easy was born.

**Andy:** I was thinking of the Cedar Tavern, back in the 1900s, near Parsons – I imagined places where people congregate, bring drinks and smokes, and just talk about the paintings they were working on.

**Lisa:** Yes, we were inspired by old-school salon-style events. We settled on the Speak/Easy idea while the three of us were sharing a bench in a Chinatown park together, talking about how to make the NYC Indie community come together again! Though Manifest no longer exists, Tess gave us some advice when we started AnimationSpeak/Easy, so it's like passing the torch.

It's like the Olympics.

**Lisa:** (Laughs) We all felt strongly about making it casual but fun, which is sometimes not the priority of animation events.

**Anna:** Yes, and the Speak/Easy must be in person.

**Andy:** And it's non-competitive. That was a really important part of it - the idea of putting your ego aside and showing somebody else's work.

**Lisa:** We also didn't want it to represent only one corner of the community. We didn't want it to only be students, but we wanted students there. We didn't want it to only be people in the old guard, but we wanted the people from the old guard there. We felt really strongly about making it something accessible to everyone.

**Lisa:** We want to keep our events free. We don't want to charge admission. We just need to make sure that we can be sustainable.

This previous year, we had some fantastic collaborations with very generous people. We found partnerships with schools and cool places like L'Alliance (formerly FIAF). What's very special for us about FIAF is that they will invite guests who are not based in New York. If we have broad enough communication with other institutions in the city, then we can start curating shows that take advantage of New York being a place where people flow in and out. Increasing exposure to the international community is a big goal for us. That just requires considerate planning and positive partnerships.



**I think that's good news. I think you guys have already found your balance in accessibility and sustainability. Time for the wrapping-up question. I actually stole it from you guys. Since you guys always ask at the Speakeasy, "Would you show this film on your first date to explain to someone what animation is," what would be your personal pick then?**

**Lisa:** Ooh, Siz! You got us! We weren't prepared for that one!

**Andy:** Oh! Ah! Oo! (Some more unspellable sounds.)

**Anna:** I think I would show *Repete* by Michaela Pavlatova.

**Andy:** On the top of my head, it would probably be - I always forget the name of the freaking film - The man who bought a house? It's a claymation film.

**Anna:** Is it the Sapegin?

**Andy:** Yes, yes! *One Day a Man Bought a House* by Piotr Sapegin

**Lisa:** I will ask you to send that to me later, Andy. I cannot remember the name of the film I would choose. It's all one shot. You are looking at the inside of a house. People always come in through one window and go out through another window.

**Anna:** It's Tango.

**Andy:** Aw! Tango. Yeah! It's amazing.

**Lisa:** I'll choose *Tango* by Zbigniew Rybczynski because I had a teacher in my first year of college who showed that to me, and I was like, WHAT? I didn't know animation could do that.

**Andy:** I know. I know.



**So, concluding this cultural discussion, I know a lot of New Yorkers, even though after several decades of living in New York, still feel that they do not belong to the city. They still feel like they're visitors. How's that experience for you? Do you now identify as a New Yorker? And if so, what do you want to say about it?**

**Andy:** Yeah, I mean, I'm a New Yorker from New York. I've lived abroad for some years, but what I love about what we're doing with Speak/Easy is making me love New York City again. It's so exhausting, stressful, and crazy living in New York City, but when you can create events like this where you bring people together, it reminds you why New York is so special.

**Lisa:** I feel like I'm a New Yorker for sure because every time I go somewhere else, I'm grumpy. In New York, cultural activities are happening all the time, and it's exciting for us to create more events in animation. Andy and I thought we knew everybody here, but we don't! Every time, we'll be like, wait, I'm sorry, how many? 40 people RSVP'd that we've never met? Who are these people? I think it's eye-opening how vast and how hungry the community is.

**Anna:** I feel I have to earn my New Yorker identification. To be able to say I am a New Yorker feels almost like a badge of honor to me and I haven't quite earned it yet. I still need Google Maps, so this keeps me from giving myself an approval. I've stayed through the pandemic, so maybe this adds some points to my New Yorker application. What matters is that this place is home to me, at least for now.

**There is no standardized exam for New Yorker qualification?**

**Andy:** No. No. No.

**Here's our second-to-last question. Going forward, what do you, individually or as a group, envision for this community that you're building?**

**Anna:** The Animation Speak/Easy team is growing. As we mentioned before, multiple people and organizations contribute to the success of our events. We have had support from SVA's MFA Computer Arts and BFA Animation departments, so we are not paying for everything out of our own pockets anymore. The first year was just enthusiasm. The second year was really about keeping it going. It's easy to start an event and to do a couple of them, but the challenge is perseverance and keeping it fresh every time, for ourselves, for our team, and, of course, for our audience.

I personally hope that at some point, we'll finally be able to have a podcast. We are recording all of the events. We have this huge archive, but until now, we haven't had the brainpower to sit down and edit it. Maybe in this coming year, we can find someone who can help us with that.

**Andy:** Yeah, we'd like to release these recordings as a podcast that allows people not based in NYC to hear our speakers talk about their inspiration and their film choices. We also have our interviews with the filmmakers, behind-the-scenes photos, and all of the research and preparation we do for each event that we'd like to organize onto a website that is accessible to educators, students, and enthusiasts who are curious but may not have access to these things.

**I think you did manage to build a cross-generational conversation in the pub. Speaking of the pub, let me ask: how did you guys decide on Rullo's? Knowing it was initially inspired by a different bar in Manhattan. How was the preparation process for your first volume?**

**Lisa:** We just needed an approachable place with a screen, a good feeling, and space. Anna: We wanted it to be somewhere people can get drinks.

**Lisa:** Yes, exactly, not a theater. Rullo's used to be one of my neighborhood's favorite restaurants, but it shut down during the pandemic. Later, Bart, the owner, reopened it as a bar. I walked by right after they reopened. They had a big screen, and I immediately thought, let's just try it. Bart was enthusiastic. He wrote back within 20 minutes after I contacted him on Instagram. We were very lucky. We can't say enough about Bart. From the beginning, he has let us change the seating, store things in his basement, turn off all his pinball machines, and reschedule events.

**Andy:** And rewired his whole stereo system.

**Anna:** An extremely supportive and enthusiastic host, and also very loyal. When we had the first event, we threw a prompt into the audience about the missing father in the film for discussion. In the end, when we were packing stuff into the car, Bart came to me and gave me his version of the story in the film.

**Lisa:** He said, "I think the father wasn't missing. He was always there."

**Anna:** So Bart is not just serving drinks there. He is actually paying attention and is involved in the discussion. We've been so fortunate to get to collaborate with him.



**Moving on to the next question, how did you get the first three invitees for the first volume? How did you get them to agree to do this event with you?**

**Andy:** Emily Hubley is a good friend of all of ours. Erica Perez was a student of mine at Pratt a long time ago, and I've known George Griffin for a long time.

**Anna:** So, getting the three of them on board for the first event was pretty easy. My husband is a documentary cinematographer who used to do magic shows, so he had the experience of running a live event. From the very beginning, he was very strict with us about how to equip our stage. We said, "Yo, we'll just sit there and talk." He was like, "No, no, no. You need to have light, you need mics, you need good sound. You have to make sure that people, all people around, can hear you and that they can see you." He took care of the setup responsibilities.

Then, we asked each guest to give us one film option. We only realized after the screening that we were extremely lucky that all these three films were very different. Their context added to each other in a fantastic way. We wanted to preserve that diversity in curation, so we asked our guests to provide multiple film choices for us to choose from, starting with the second event.

**Awesome. It's good to know that you had helpers and found something new to learn immediately. What else did you learn from your first event? Did you make any other changes or improvements afterward?**

**Lisa:** The first time, we didn't know who would come or how it would go – we assumed only our friends would come, but we are continuously floored by the breadth of this community! When curating, we think a lot about representation. Like, can we include someone more senior in their career and someone who's more mid-level? They shouldn't all be working in commercials. They shouldn't all be indie. We should have individuals representing different demographics and backgrounds. It's also important to us that we have not only people who are animators but also other artists who care about animation. The promise of diversity is not only important to us as human beings but also within the world of animation.

Animation Speak/Easy appears to be the three of us, but there are, in fact, many people helping us along the way. Anna's husband, my partner, Andy's wife, Matt, our audio engineer, Michael, our photographer, Nix, our intern, and Mostafa, our volunteer, all help us to put on the shows. We're very lucky that we have such generous people in our community.

**Andy:** A lot of people joined the bandwagon.

**There are sure to be a lot of anecdotes to delve into. We can talk more about them when we're actually at a bar. Going back to the information you shared in your self-introduction, coming from different cultural backgrounds, how does your culture influence you regarding your desire for community, your perspective on animation, and your experience of New York City? How do its influences come into play with the relationship dynamic between all three of you, if there's any?**

**Anna:** It's hard to give a short answer. Wherever you come from influences you and your whole life. I was born and raised in Russia, but then many important things happened to me in Germany, and then even more happened to me here. Ultimately, I feel very comfortable in New York because many people share the same story. I think NYC welcomes people who are in between places, in between cultures, and in between perspectives.

**When you relocate, you always need a local guide who will show you the hidden places and explain the hidden meanings in the culture. When I moved to Germany, that guide was my husband. Right now, Andy and Lisa are those people. I have been learning the precise meanings of some seemingly mundane expressions in the English language from them all the time.**

**Andy:** I enjoy it because my background is in ESL (teaching English as a Second Language).

**Lisa:** I think you gave a really apt response, Anna. New York is a choice for a lot of people. Most people who come to our show weren't born and raised here. I'm also not from New York, but we still chose this city. You have to like something about New York City to choose it because it is so intense.

**Andy:** You need differences in New York City, too.

**Lisa:** I think that is exactly part of the idea behind Animation Speak/Easy.

We live in a time when algorithms curate our tastes and tell us what to watch. In response to that computational power, we designed Animation Speak/Easy with the idea of being in a space with people born in different years, coming from different countries, different schools—whatever it is. We hope every person who comes on the stage presents individualism. So, when they recommend something to you, you are being recommended something by a human with tastes, experiences, and stories.

**Anna:** And with reasons. Sometimes, even though you don't like you don't like someone's film selection at first, you might find it more compelling after listening to the reasons they picked it. Just opening up to hearing different perspectives.

**Andy:** For sure. It's one of the same things I love about teaching. You have students recommending things that you might be turned off by at first, but they really open up new ideas to you.

**Yeah, I agree. I think that human experience is important because thinking is a social activity. You cannot think alone, so you need to meet people, and New York City is a great place to do that. What you guys are doing elevates this experience.**

**Lisa:** Well, I think you just wrote your article. That's a great line.

