

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

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October 2025



Still from *Poppa* by Peter Ahern

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Saturday, September 13 was an amazing day for animation.

We had our Social Media and Animation panel discussion with Pat Smith, JavaDoodles, Nate Ziller, Annastacia (Missink toons) Henry-Ramos, Peter (Pikapetey) Casey and Desmond Du. With a combined over 1 billion views and over 4 million subs, the panelists shared some great stories, what videos went viral and why, how to handle professional collabs and amazing advice.



Pat, Annastacia Peter, Desmond, JavaDoodles, Nate photo by Josue Advincola

Later that day, Signe Bauman and Bill Plympton hosted Made in New York: Best of NYC Indie Animation at the Metrograph movie theater featuring amazing films, and a great Q&A (see the transcript in this issue) from our local scene.

And that was just one day. s. What about the other 29 days in the month? Well to help keep track of everything that’s happening in our area we’ve partnered with AnimMarquee, an online animation guide. They are doing an amazing job in cataloguing every animation event on their instagram and website and will soon be taking over the Events page on our website. Just so you know, there were only 5 days in September where there was nothing happening and we’re very happy to be working with them.

This month we have two events, an AI and Animation panel, at the Hudson Park Library, and, to celebrate International Animation Day, the second NYC Animation Weekend at Hostos Community College in the Bronx.

I’m very excited about the AI panel because as an independent animator I see a lot of potential in using it to help me finish work due to paucity of time and money, something every artist can relate to. For instance, the summer before last I used it for coding when I was creating my “Olifant Wants To Go Home” Roblox game and it was the only reason I was able to finish before school started up again. But as a former commercial animator I see a lot of disruption in the industry and a possible loss of jobs. So are there more pros than cons? Cons then pros?

Let’s find out.

INTERNATIONAL REPORT

With September sweeping through we’ve gotten over 200 submissions for International Animation Day, with submission from Cyprus , ASIFA South , India and more! We also got in our 2nd round up of nominations for the International Board and the list reads as follows:

| Title | Nominee | Nominated by | Seconded by | Date |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| VP Ongoing Projects | Deanna Morse | Anastasia Dimitra | Agnes Li | July 24, 2025 |
| VP Development | Johnchill Li | Nelson Shin | Anastasia Dimitra | July 24, 2025 |
| VP Operations | Mohamed Ghazala | Nancy Phelps | | July 28, 2025 |
| VP Communications | Annegret Richter | Thomas Renoldner | | August 13, 2025 |
| Director of Marketing and Public Relations | Saraswathi Buyyala | Corrie Parks | Ginger Marisa Tontaveetong | August 16, 2025 |
| Director of Membership | Thomas Renoldner | Corrie Parks | | August 16, 2025 |
| Auditor | Nelson Shin | Anastasia Dimitra | Agnes Li Pencho Kunchev | August 19, 2025 |
| AI counselor (?) | | | | |

FIGURE DRAWING

Last Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm
Titmouse Studios

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

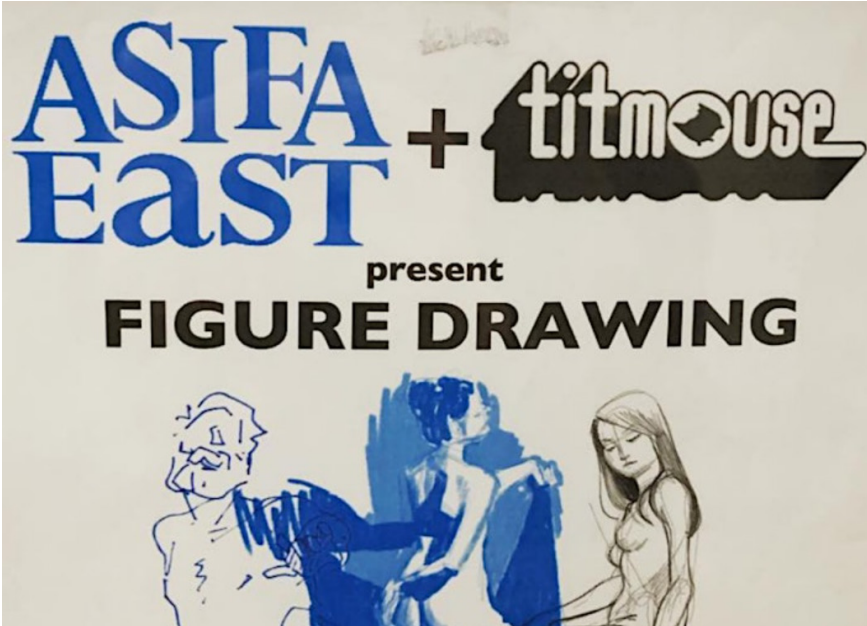


Figure drawing sessions are offered to members first by email. If all the spots aren't filled close to the date, the sign up will be opened to the public on our socials.

EVENTS

AI AND ANIMATION PANEL DISCUSSION



New York
Public
Library

Saturday October 11
11:00 am
Hudson Park Library
66 Leroy St. (West Village)

A panel discussion with animators about the importance of on online presence, how to successfully promote your work and how to turn a profit.

Featuring panelists Patrick Smith, Nate Ziller, Desmond Du, Staci Henry-Ramos and Peter Casey. Combined they have millions of YouTube subscribers, hundreds of thousands on TikTok and tens of thousands Instagram followers.

NYC ANIMATION WEEKEND



Saturday October 25
10:00 am
500 Grand Concourse
The Bronx, NY



ASIFA-East presents NYC Animation Weekend, an event to celebrate International Animation Day, to honor the first public performance of projected moving images: Emile Reynaud's Theatre Optique in Paris, on the 28th October 1892.

They'll be panel discussions, screenings, demonstrations, and a chance to hang out with other animations all while enjoying films from around the world.



PETER AHERN

There is something interesting and consumable about
short form storytelling

a conversation with Doug Vitarelli



Where do you think your sense of humor and love for horror come from?

Oh, that's a good question. I think part of it comes from my parents, a little sarcastic and offbeat. And growing up I read stuff like Calvin and Hobbes and The Far Side, which are smart and funny, but also kind of wicked. I was also into Edward Gorey's macabre stories, I had a couple of his little books.

Then I discovered genre movies in High School. I was always kind of a scaredy cat as a kid, but I had made some new friends and they were into testing the limits of what we could sit through. Movie watching became a participatory event - cracking jokes at the screen, gasping in shock, you know...so that's where the horror obsession was born and my sensibilities started blending together.

And you went to Pratt?

Yep. It was one of the only colleges in the early 2000s that still had a traditional animation department and I really wanted to study that process with paper, clay, stop motion... that sort of stuff. I figured if I learned on a computer program and it disappeared I'd be stuck, but traditional methods could be applied to anything.

And it was this real transitional time in creative fields with new tools and tech. A lot of schools were pushing Digital Arts, and had converted to only teaching animation software. But not Pratt!

Yeah, I taught there from '96 to 2001. Something like that.

A little before me, I arrived in 2005, so I was studying filmmaking in the old ARC building, you know, under the gym.

But not anymore. Have you been back?

Yeah, it's super fancy. I sat through all that construction during my four years at Pratt and never got to take part in the beautiful new facilities, but man, it's a far cry from the ARC, hearing the basketballs slamming overhead while we fought over 3 work stations in a little windowless room.

Okay, so you went to Pratt and then you just stayed in the city?

Yeah, after graduation I interned at Curious Pictures. Do you remember that studio? Sadly it's gone now and I haven't seen a place like it since...this huge space, doing creative, mixed media work. I was so impressed - the giant green screen room, the workshop for making stop motion puppets, artists drafting on paper... It was so cool.

I had expected to find a staff job at a studio, but I couldn't find a position anywhere because I graduated during the 2008 recession. I forget how I got that internship, but it was my only offer. And it didn't pay.

But I took it because I figured it might get my foot in the door. I have mixed feelings about internships, I feel like they're often predatory, but this one panned out. It actually ended up launching my career.

Curious placed me on various commercial projects, and I met a bunch of other freelance animators, working alongside them as an assistant. Then they would go off freelancing at a different studio across the city and they would drop my name like, "Oh, we need all hands on deck, let's bring in Peter Ahern. I worked with him at Curious and he's quick on things", so that's how I started. I'd show up and help get things to the finish line.

Yeah, that's the great, classic way to do it. Let me ask you something, do you think that is gone now? Because that studio system doesn't exist anymore. Or is there another way? Do you know what I mean?

I know what you mean. I think it's a lot harder now because I've been working remotely almost completely since the pandemic. Everything's online. We're on Slack. We're on Google Hangouts or whatever. But trying to establish a personal relationship is so much different than before. I used to go on lunch breaks with colleagues and after work, we'd grab a beer or something and decompress together. There were just more opportunities for small talk and connection. And now, it's like, "good morning", "assignment discussions", "good night".

Now if you're an animator in New York, I think you want to do your own stuff and I found that most animators have a side project that they're really trying to do. Now you're on your third film?

Yeah, I've done a couple at this point.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

JOSUÉ AGUSTIN ADVINCOLA



Work "Buddies" is an animated series that follows Tomas, a new employee of Market Jam. As with any job, Tomas must learn to find his way in his new work environment. Nevertheless, the workplace he is in is far from ordinary, brimming with a variety of wacky scenarios. The pilot episode has screened at The Latino Film Market, Bucks County FilmFest, and the Art All Night - Trenton: Film Festival. Episode is currently in production and will be released 2026.



And you've done pretty well with awards.

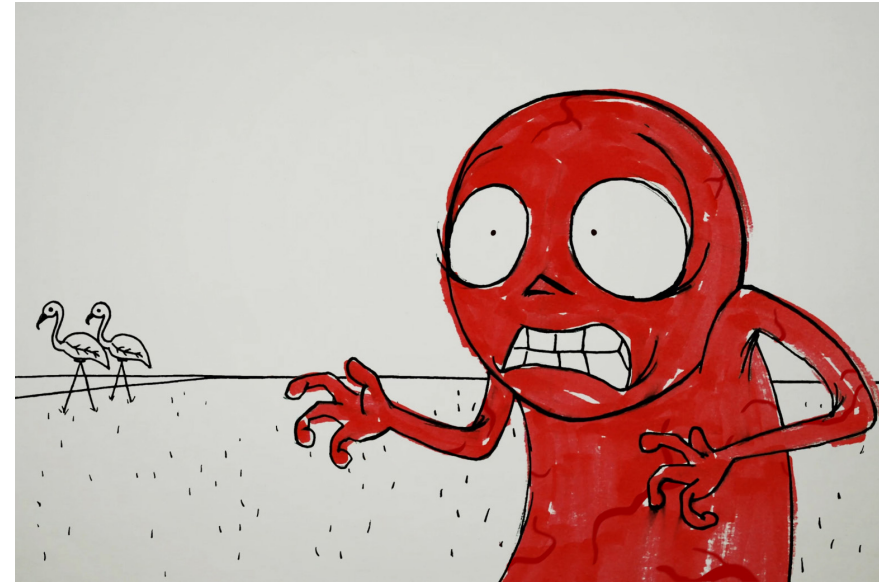
It's both humbling and validating. Want to know my favorite one?

Absolutely!

It's from ScreamFest, this big horror festival in LA. It takes place at the Chinese Theater, it's very Hollywood. And Buzzkill was nominated against all these other studio animated shorts, huge teams that worked on these sort of...they're almost like pilot episodes of unproduced TV shows. Anyway, I just did not think I was gonna win it all. I flew home before the awards show.

Then I woke up to a text from a friend saying "holy crap Buzzkill won!" and I was completely shocked. Sure enough, ScreamFest mailed me this sick gold-plated trophy. Honestly the chance of winning the award was the reason I applied to that festival in the first place. Talk about good marketing.

So cool.



So since the pandemic you have pretty much been working at home. So how do you stay so focused so that you are able to do your professional work and then your personal work?

So with Buzzkill (the first one that I did during the pandemic), that film happened because, as with everyone else, there was just so much free time suddenly. There's no commute, no social commitments, at least for the first year and a half.

The lifestyle change gave me a lot more energy and I was suddenly able to make progress animating shots on nights and weekends. Eventually I took a couple months off from freelancing just to focus on finishing Buzzkill because I knew it was going to take forever if I kept chipping away at my current pace and I just needed to get it done. I had sort of budgeted my freelance income in a way where I could live off of that while I finished the short and I felt comfortable being able to take some time.

And then with Poppa, the one I did last fall, that was sort of meant to just be something to keep my engine running. It started as an exercise, something really, really short, like a gif. And then I was like, "Well, I'm designing a character, and I have to make a background, and then choose a color palette, and then..." so I realized I may as well just use this world I was building and flesh it out a bit into a mini short film.

It turned into like a minute and a half thing, really fast, but it still took a couple months to do because I wanted it to look very slick and polished. At the time of that production I had maybe a month of downtime between work, and so I just worked on it every day, like a job.

All this to say that I've been able to find these pockets when work is slow and then pick up a personal project and treat the production like a job, 10-7, Monday through Friday.

You're starting to build a body of work with a unique voice. I'm wondering, do you have bigger plans in mind?

My whole angle is that there is something interesting and consumable about short form storytelling. People seem to think you must aspire to make features. I disagree. So far while I've been toying with the idea of a creepy animated anthology series that involves multiple artists or at least different art styles between the various segments, which are interconnected.

If you watch a lot of horror, you know the set up can be super simple, like, ok, let's introduce a cursed amulet and here's how it's messing up people's lives all throughout the ages of time and space or whatever. You just need something that can give every segment a jumping off point. I love the idea and am trying to pitch it to people, but so far no one's biting.

Executives seem more interested in a TV show about a family with a 10 season outline and fart jokes. I'm not kidding, that's verbatim. And not exactly my sensibilities. Regardless, I really feel like audiences are seeking faster, shorter content and I haven't really seen it explored much with animated horror. I think people would eat it up.

Who do you pitch to?

I've met with a couple of development departments at large production studios. So, when Buzzkill came out online after it played in festivals...

It did really well, by the way, over 2 million views.

Yeah, that's crazy. I don't have that kind of personal following, but it was acquired by Alter, which is a horror short platform. It's a non-exclusive agreement, they're really great and very pro-artist. So they throw you a few bucks, and you grant them the ability to host your short online. They have this huge fan base and all those people get their eyeballs on it, which is more than I could ever do if I uploaded it to my own channels.

Anyway, when Buzzkill landed online, I chased all these publications, like Fangoria and Cartoon Brew, messaging them, "You guys write about shorts, you know, it's Halloween season, I have this festival hit, would you like to write about it?" and some of them took me up on it, and that press helped boost the exposure and landed me on some big people's radars.

And then as I mentioned, it led to opportunities to talk with a couple studio development departments. They wanted to pick my brain about stuff, hear my ideas for other projects and while nothing has really panned out from it, those doors have been left open, which is nice.

So what's next, and where do you go?

For now, I'm seeing where life takes me. I made Poppa recently to keep the engine running and have something to play on the film festival circuit.

I'm a huge fan of these events, and I feel like they're a really great source of inspiration and connection. Both in the stuff that you get to see and also who you meet, such as other filmmakers and enthusiastic audiences. It's just this whole network of people who

love film making. And I feel that festivals offer interesting travel opportunities and help me stay sort of relevant in my film circles. So I find a lot of value in creating things that allow me to explore this path.

Where does the drive come from? It's just just enjoying it. You know, you like being a part of it?

This is just my own experience, but I don't see a lot of animated horror stuff out there. It might exist, but it's not easy to find. So I am making this stuff because I want to see it. Every day I work on commercials or corporate projects and I never get to do anything that's weird and character driven. That's got some fun blood n guts. So that's my drive.

Who do you like?

The biggest one? Tim Burton. This is probably true for a lot of artsy weirdo kids from the suburbs. But he was a real gateway for me, proving strange or bizarre productions could find big commercial success. I was really into him in the early 2000s, before his career took a weird nose dive, and he became this Disney shill. I was obsessed with his 90s films. His 80s films. I still love those movies, I have them memorized.

But even as a child I was drawn to him. I saw A Nightmare Before Christmas in theaters when I was six years old. I remember discovering the other kids at school were not allowed to go see it, and I was confused, like "Why not? I've gone three times!". So Burton was planted in my head early on.

Edward Gorey is the other main influence. He illustrated a lot of these John Bellairs mystery novels I was into as a kid and then I discovered his own material. He has a very dry, almost cruel sense of humor. And his drawings are so stark and bleak. You can tell he's definitely lived through some winters in New England and I could relate, growing up in MA.

Later in life, I really enjoyed the TV shows "The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack" and "Over the Garden Wall", those both seeped into my bones.

