

Focus on Polish Animation | Animation News

During the next Cartoon Forum, held between September 13 and 17 in Sopot in Poland, on Wednesday September 14th at 3pm a press conference is organized about 'Animation in Poland'.

In close co-operation with The [Polish Film Institute](#) Animation News looks back and ahead at the animation productions produced in Poland so far, including the Oscar-winning animated puppet film *Peter and the Wolf* (2006) by Suzie Templeton, made in Se-ma-for Studios in Łódź.



At the end of this article we publish the very interesting article 'Animation is a weapon', written by the Polish author Adriana Prodeus (Twitter: @ozywiak)

Peter and the Wolf by BreakThru Films

The Polish Film Institute (PISF) supports production and project development and awards script scholarships for animated films, primarily as part of its two priorities: Authorial Films and Films for Young & Family Audience.

"As regards Authorial Films, we prefer projects of high artistic and festival potential, notable for their originality and inventiveness, both with respect to the theme and the techniques used. More often than not, such animated films will be short, not infrequently impressionistic and poetic."



"As for Films for Young Audience, our priority are animated series for children that share a distinctive central theme, character, background, topic or artistic style. These projects will be characterised by high educational and cognitive value as well as an ethical message. They may explore the subject of children and youth in the modern world in a form that is appealing and intelligible to young audiences, while limiting scenes of violence. Funding may also be granted to feature cartoons intended, first of all, for cinema audiences if they meet the above criteria."

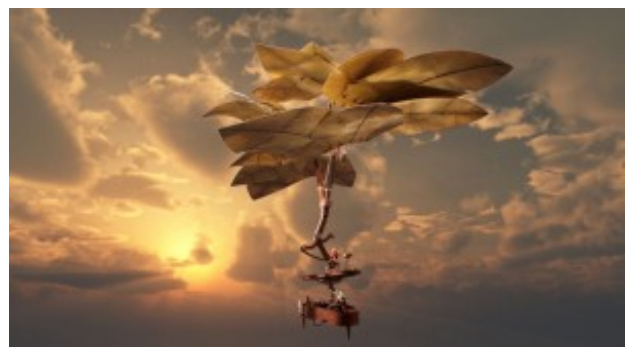


POLISH FILM INSTITUTE

Animated films are most closely related to painting, and now also to artistic computer graphics, therefore, support for such projects is a crucial part of the Institute's mission. PISF is committed to support various projects, both those reflecting the current changes in technology and the natural successors of traditional stop motion, puppet or cutout animation.

The Flying Machine. Photo by BreakThru

In 2010, PISF granted funding to 9 animated film projects at the development stage in the total amount of PLN 875,375.00 and to 30 animated film projects at the production stage in the total amount of PLN 18,475,000.00, of which 7 projects (the total of PLN 7,840,000.00) were planned as international co-productions. Hence, we allocated 30% of the funds earmarked for project development and 15% of the funds for film production to animated films. Nearly 17% of all partially funded international co-productions were animations.



George the Hedgehog. Photo by Monolith Films

Polish Animation Studio's:

PLATIGE IMAGE www.platige.com, Human Ark
www.human-ark.com, Studio Filmowe Anima-Pol
www.animapol.pl,
Studio Miniatur Filmowych www.smf.com.pl and RDF
Studio www.rdf.com.pl

The Lost Town of Switez (2011) by Kamil Pola. Photo by
Human Ark

**We also publish a list of Selected Polish Animation
Films Awards for the years 2007-2011.**

2011:

Copernicus Star, by Zdzisław Kudła i Andrzej
Orzechowski:

- Tehran International Animation Festival (Iran), Best
Animated Feature;

Paths of Hate, by Damian Nenow:

- European Independent Film Festival – ÉCU, Paris
(France), Best Animation

The Mask, by Stephen and Timothy Quay

- International Film Festival for Children and Young People in Montevideo (Uruguay), Best International
Short Animation;

- Athens International Film and Video Festival (USA), Animation First Prize;

- International Festival of Animated Films in Teplice (Czech Republic), Best Short Film;

- Annecy International Animation Film Festival (France), Sacem Award in recognition of Krzysztof
Penderecki's music

The Lost Town of Switez, by Kamil Polak:

- Las Palmas International Film Festival (Spain), Grand Prix;

- Annecy International Animation Film Festival (France), Best Debut Award;

- Palm Springs International Short Film Festival (USA), Grand Prix

B-1033, by Paweł Kryszak:

- GoEast Wiesbaden (Germany), Best Animation, Best Experimental Film

The Journey on a Stormy Cloud, by Agnieszka Sadurska, Janusz Martyn, Artur Wrotniewski, Andrzej Piotr
Morawski:

- Hugo TV Awards, Chicago (USA), Special Mention

Underlife, by Jarosław Konopka:

- Los Angeles New Wave International Film Festival, Second Place, Best Directing, Best Animated Visual
Gallery, by Robert Proch:

- CFC Worldwide Short Film Festival, Toronto– Best Short Animation Award

Paths of Hate, by Damian Nenow:

- Annecy International Animation Film Festival (France), Special Mention;

- Mundos Digitalis, La Coruna (Spain), Best International Animation Film, Special Jury Prize for Directing
and Art Directing;

- Siggraph 2011 (Canada), Jury Prize

Danny Boy, by Marek Skrobecki:

- FilmVideo Montecatini (Italy), Pinocchio Award

Crulic -The Path to Beyond by Anca Damian:

- Locarno International Film Festival, Special Mention

2010:

Winter Fairies, by Anna Dudek: Anima Mundi, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo:

- Anima Mundi Itinerant Award

Esterhazy, by Izabela Plucińska:

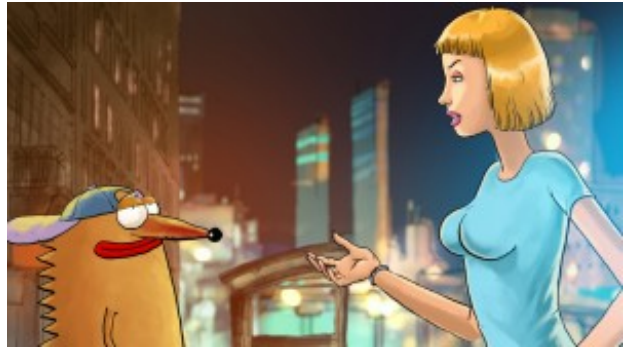
- Expresión En Corto (Mexico), Best Short Animation;

- International Short Film Festival in Drama (Greece), Best Animation;

- European Film Festival in Essone (France), Prix Spécial des Lycéens

Danny Boy, by Marek Skrobecki:

- Alpine, Nenzing (Austria), Best Animation



Millhaven, by Bartek Kulas:

- BALKANIMA (Serbia), Best Music;
- The Anchorage International Film Festival (USA), Special Mention

Kinematograph, by Tomasz Bagiński:

- Cyprus International Film Festival, Best Animation

Animated History of Poland by Tomasz Bagiński:

- Animago Award 2010, „The Best Visualization”

2009:

The Chick, by Michał Socha:

- Annecy International Animation Film Festival (France), Award for Creative Use of Music;

Broken seal, by Paweł Czarzasty i Robert Turło:

- Festival for Children and Youth, Nairobi (Kenia), Best Animation, Best TV Series

Copernicus Star, by Zdzisław Kudła i Andrzej Orzechowski:

- Moscow International Children's and Youth Film Festival, Special Mention

2007:

Peter and the Wolf by Suzie Templeton:

- British Academy Film Award (BAFTA) Best Short Animation;
- Pulcinella Italian Television Animation Awards (Italy), Best European Programme;
- Rose d'Or – The Global Entertainment Television Festival (Switzerland), Golden Rose, Performance Category;
- Annecy International Animation Film Festival (France), Grand Prix: Annecy Cristal, Audience Award;
- Tindirindis International Animated Film Festival, Vilnius (Lithuania), Honorary Diploma;
- KROK International Animated Film Festival (Odessa, Sevastopol, Jalta, Kiev) (Ukraine), Jury Special Award “For the new interpretation of Prokofiev's theme”

Tailor Thread, by Andrzej Gosieniecki:

- Cairo International Film Festival For Children (Egypt), Bronze Faraon in Animation Film Category;
- “Prix Danube” in Bratislava, International Jury Special Award

Caracas, by Anna Błaszczuk:

- BIMINI International Festival of Animation Films, Riga (Latvia), Artistry and Direction Diploma, Film Debuts Category;
- Dresden Filmfest (Germany), Special Mention

On the princess enchanted into a frog, by Robert Turło:

- Worldfest Independent Film Festival Houston (USA), Jury Special Prize

Polish author Adriana Prodeus wrote a very interesting article about the Polish Animation Industry.

‘Animation is a weapon’

What makes Polish animation different is above all the strong auteur cinema tradition. To make films in order to express one's own artistic credo, to use the language of visual form and to apply metaphor – this is how Polish directors of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s understood the role of cinema. Jan Lenica, Walerian Borowczyk, Daniel Szczechura, Mirosław Kijowicz, Stefan Schabenbeck, Julian Antonisz and others set world standards till this day. Animation under the communist regime served to sidestep censorship by applying more symbolic criticism of the system than that in feature films or documentaries.

Contemporary artists also opt for individuality thus ensuring a great variety of animated films and cultivating individual styles. Students of animation learn to become directors and artists who use classic techniques. This is why the Oscar-winning animated puppet film Peter and the Wolf (2006) by Suzie Templeton was made in Se-ma-for Studios in Łódź. Young directors, who know tradition well and are proficient in 2D and 3D computer animation techniques, are today the lifeblood of this art. This allows them to apply the highest world standards to make films that are their own.

An example of this type of production is the monumental project by Kamil Polak The Lost Town of Switez (2011) which took 7 years to make. The film is an original adaptation of a romantic ballad which draws inspiration from 19th century Polish and Russian oil paintings, medieval icons and the poetics of gothic horror stories. This spectacular vision is the realisation of a dream to bring paintings to life and... for its author the graduation diploma from the National Higher School of Film, Television and Theatre in Łódź. Keeping in mind the famous Tango (1980) by Zbigniew Rybczyński animation directors are willing to experiment. Artist Wojciech Bąkowski, renowned globally for his film and sound installations executed in galleries, is without a doubt the leader of this trend. With his primitive, animated films, audioperformances built on distorted sound and untamed, language poetry he creates an intimate interdisciplinary world which reveals his great sensitivity. He was recognised, among others, by the New Museum in New York where Spoken Movie 1 (2007) was included in the Younger Than Jesus exhibition. His is now beginning a great

career on the international art scene.

A vigorous expansion of Polish animated films in the last few years owes to the recent widespread promotion of work by the classics. After many years of obscurity the best of Polish animation is finally available in three DVD sets: The Anthology of Polish Animated Film, The Anthology of Experimental Film and The Anthology of Polish Children's Animation prepared by Marcin Giżycki. They are accompanied by a DVD set Action Animation. The Newest Films and a book called Polish Animated Film (2008), a compendium of knowledge on the subject. Better awareness of this art by the public and the youngest generation of artists facilitates drawing from tradition in a conscious way. This was done for instance by Michał Socha whose film Chick (2008) – a reinterpretation of the style of Henryk Tomaszewski's Polish poster art school – has won many awards at Polish and international festivals.

One such event is the three-year old Poznań "Animator" festival (this year taking place between 15th and 21st July). It is a large, energetic festival which attracts the most important producers from across the world and where animation and music feed off one another. Important events also include those organised in Kraków: Etiuda & Anima, OFAFA, Krakow Film Festival and the animation sections at festivals dedicated to feature films: Era Nowe Horyzonty in Wrocław or Młodzi i Film in Koszalin.

The success of this art film scene has in recent years inspired the Quay Brothers to create two films in Poland: Inventory of traces (2009) and Mask (2010). The former is an impression-based, animated documentary about the castle in Łańcut, "a ballet of things" performed to the music by Krzysztof Penderecki. The latter is an adaptation of a short-story by Stanisław Lem about a blood-thirsty robot-mantis whom we follow from the moment of hatching, through courtship up to the moment she kills her male victim. Both films are creations of a new chapter in Stephen and Timothy Quay's work: Inventory relates to their earlier animated documentary films but it significantly develops the commentary and documentary aspect and adds computer-generated effects; Mask explores the minimal movement and rich colours of puppet animation techniques. The recently published collection of essays entitled The Thirteenth Month. Brothers' Quay Cinema (2010) is the first book entirely dedicated to Quay Brothers' work. Their next project, a full-length reinterpretation of Wojciech Has's famous film based on Brunon Schulz's The Hourglass Sanatorium, is still awaiting funding.

After years of living away from home, Oscar-winning Zbigniew Rybczyński has returned to Poland and is preparing to open his own studio in the legendary Feature Film Studio in Wrocław. He is also developing a new kind of lens that will revolutionise optics. He writes about his plans in A treatise on the visual image (2009).

One unquestionable revelation of recent years is Mariusz Wilczyński, who for a long time made music videos and short independent TV contributions outside of mainstream animation. What brought him attention was his sublime yet simple drawing style combined with carefully chosen music, most often jazz by Tomasz Stańko. His films leave a lasting memory thanks to Wilczyński's great sensitivity to music and subtlety as well as his deeply emotional and melancholic style. Wider audiences know him as the author of the visual setting of the culture TV channel Kultura, for which he won the Hot Bird TV Awards twice. Unfortunately (2004) and Kizi Mizi (2007), screened at the National Gallery in London, MoMA and Anthology Film Archive in New York, put Wilczyński up with the top players worldwide. Now, the director is translating his intimate theatre of memories into an animated feature film – Kill It and Leave the Town is due in 2013.

Piotr Dumala, one of the greatest animation artists and the author of such classic pieces as Gentle Spirit (1985), Franz Kafka (1991) and Crime and Punishment (2000), made a surprising feature-film debut – a full length live-action film which met with great interest by viewers and critics. The black and white Forest (2009), with virtually no dialogue nor music and built around beautifully lit, static frames, tells the story of a father and a son in two interweaving plots. Aesthetically the film harks back to Dumala's plaster-scratched drawings. The live-action part of the film is preceded by an expressive, animated prelude. Today Dumala uses pure animation as a point of departure for experimentation. The panoramic installation Fight, Love and Work (2009) accompanied by lyrical music by Alexander Balanescu was screened only in public spaces. It is one of the author's best works, a ballet of monumental and brightly coloured figures emerging from a corn field. Using his own film entitled Crime and Punishment the director also created a compilation film with a new storyline to accompany music by Dmitri Shostakovich. Dumala introduced wit into his collection of short stories called Dr Character Presents (2010) stylised as early Polish television programmes.

Fine-art animated films are not present on Polish television. Audiences have been wooed by "Włatcy Much" (2006-2010) by Bartek Kędzierski, a poor rendition of Southpark, which spurred by its popularity was adapted for the cinema (2009). The only recent animated comedy is George the Hedgehog (2010) by Wojtek Wawarczyk and Kuba Tarkowski, an adaptation of a popular comic book, which however did not translate well into a full-length commercial production. Ambitious and witty creative activity moved online. The Twożywo group is without a doubt the most original among these artists with its poster graphics and simple Flash animation with which it documents "the joys, the life and the trials and turbulations of the fearless hero" Captain Europe. The duo's philosophical short films (for instance Blackout 2006-2007) can be found on their

website.

We are still awaiting Jerzy Kucia's new film. The master of abstract poems composed with sounds and pictures is continuing his work on an original impression which will explore the emotions and the meanings of landscape. Since his last work, *Tuning the Instruments* (2000), Kucia has dedicated his time mainly to teaching at the Kraków School of Art and bringing up whole generations of talented animation directors. Robert Sowa (*Interior Portrait* 1999, *Sequence* 2007), Wiola Sowa (*Refrains* 2007), Edyta Turczanik (*Everything Flows* 2007), Ewa Borysewicz (*Who would have thought?* 2009) and Stephanie Sergeant (*Extraspection* 2010) are among the most prominent of his disciples. Drawing from his own craftsmanship Kucia taught them the art of hand-made drawings, stop-motion animation, the precision of rhythm and the care for image quality.

Talent, imagination and originality of style are distinctive for Małgorzata Bosek (*Dokumanimo* 2007, *Gibbons' island* 2010) and Tomasz Kozak (*The Opera of Salvation* 1998, *The Affair of A Gentleman* 2000). Her painting-like films draw on grotesquely portrayed emotions and relationships. His psychedelic humour and camp eroticism are diabolical beyond compare.

Marek Skrobecki (*Ichtys* 2005, *Danny Boy* 2010) and Marek Serafiński (*An Idea* 2007, *Safari* 2009) continue their creative work, yet despite the proficiency of their techniques, contents-wise they are forcing an open door. Interesting results are achieved when feature-film creator Andrzej Barański (*The Countdown* 2006) or cinema historian Marcin Giżycki (*Panta Rhei* 2008, *Sicilian Flea* 2008) try their hand at animation; or when experienced animator Krzysztof Kiwerski experiments with new aesthetics (*Crossing the Red Sea* 2007).

The most active of the oldest generation of directors is Witold Giersz. The creator of famous films painted directly in front of the camera animates prehistoric cave painting on stone. The Polish tradition of director's animated films for children is continued by: Joanna Jasińska-Koronkiewicz (*Milenka* 2002, *The Flax* 2006), Magdalena Osińska (*Joyets* 2008), Jan Steliżuk (*Mushrooms of the Storm* 2009), Izabela Plucinska (*Esterhazy* 2009, *Josette* 2010), Leszek Gałysz (*The Clock That Ran Amok* 2009) and Aga Jarzabowa (*A Dragon And a Hero* 2009) who understands this genre in her own perverse way. In Wrocław, Galeria Entropia runs the Children's Film Factory where children and young people can learn how to express themselves through animation.

Computer animation within the director's cinema trend is chiefly the domain of Tomasz Bagiński – the author of the Oscar-nominated film *The Cathedral* (2002), the BAFTA-winning *Fallen Art* (2004), and the well-made film *The Kinematograph* (2009). The director classifies his works together with computer art and new media. On a daily basis he makes commercials and creates special effects for big European productions. Recently, he has made *The Animated History of Poland* (2010) for the World Expo in Shanghai. The eight-minute production is screened in cinemas and inspires heated discussions about the tackiness of presentation of national mythology. Although his critics point to the lack of depth of meaning and recycled visual form, he is certainly a distinctive personality on the Polish animation scene. His success inspired widespread interest in 3D technique, and the Platige Image studio is where artists such as Grzegorz Jonkajtys or Damian Nenow had their debut.

Newcomers who are well-worth keeping trace of include Piotr Szczepanowicz, Paweł Dębski, Agata Gorządek, Olga Wroniewicz, Kuba Wroński, Mateusz Heldwein, Norman Leto, Anita Kwiatkowska-Naqvi, Balbina Bruszevska, Przemysław Adamski and Kasia Kijek.