

CEE Animation Forum 2021: Winners Revealed

The CEE Animation Forum, the leading regional pitching, financing and co-production event, was held online from 26 April to 6 May 2021. The award ceremony marked the grand finale of the 2021 extended two-week edition showcasing 40 animated projects in 5 categories – selected from 116 submissions. International juries composed of globally renowned experts from the film industry awarded various prizes in the total amount of EUR 15,000 in cash and free scholarships or direct access to prestigious European events.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, the CEE Animation Forum again took place online but was expanded into a two-week event. *“The unchanging situation forced us to remain in the online environment. Taking it as an advantage, we decided to bring our content to the largest audience possible, and we live-streamed 80% of the programme for free. This has turned out to be an excellent decision as the first statistics surpassed all our expectations,”* explains Matija Sturm, Managing Director.

The public was able to follow the programme via Facebook Live. So far, 1 350 hours of video content have been played, engaging more than 1 300 people altogether. Pitching videos and selected sessions of the industry programme (discussion panels, presentations, case studies) will remain available to the public until 15 May.

Over 350 film professionals took advantage of having access to exclusive content – such as the keynote by Wendy Bernfeld (Rights Stuff) on VODs for animation or full access to the 1:1 meetings with the attending industry professionals, authors and decision-makers. The four days dedicated to this online networking registered an all-time record of 846 online meetings realized.

"This edition was rewarding for the whole team, scattered over several countries. However, we were used to watching people come together to connect and discuss exciting new work. The online environment hasn't prevented us from helping all these promising projects meet new audiences," adds Saša Bach, Project Manager.

The ninth edition also brought several innovations. In 2021, the pitching floor was newly opened to students who showed an impressive range of topics and animation techniques in the Rising Stars category. The Out-of-competition section showcased five winning projects from the leading regional events. All registered participants had a unique opportunity for the preview of the CEE Animation Talents, a selection of seven short films made by the most talented young animation filmmakers from Central and Eastern Europe. The premiere is planned at Anifilm IFAF 2021 (June 22 – 27, Liberec, CZ).

The winners of the CEE Animation Forum 2021 are as follows:

CATEGORY FEATURE FILMS

Jury members: Anca Damian, Pierre Mazars, Tonje Skar Reiersen

Winner: ***Birds Don't Look Back***

d. Nadia Nackle, p. Sebastien Onomo, Special Touch Studios, France

Jury statement: The CEE Award goes to *Birds Don't Look Back* in recognition of the project's poetic approach to a universal story that will resonate internationally. The combination of a talented and original female director supported by a well-established new generation producer is a desirable and promising constellation.

Special Mention: ***Dreamworld***

d. Veljko Popovic, Milivoj Popovic, p. Milivoj Popovic, Veljko Popovic, Prime Render d.o.o., Croatia

Special Mention: ***Senior Crush***

d. Orsolya Richolm, p. Andrea Ausztrics, ULab Kft, Hungary

CATEGORY TV SERIES

Jury members: Claudia Cazzato, Albert Hanan Kaminski, Richard Lutterbeck

Winner: ***The Olive Bunch***

d. Magnus Kravik, p. Maria Pavlou, Pixel giants, Cyprus

Jury statement: From the first images, you want to be part of this gang: Fresh designs – warm colours – emotional stories with a lot of fun produced with precise animation timing. *The Olive Bunch* is a promising 2D tale of friends and family with a sprinkle of magic taking place in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. The content is a colourful splash in the carefree childhood that has the potential to captivate the young and young at heart. A well-delivered pitch and a strong, committed team are the extra elements that make it impossible not to fall for this project made in Cyprus.

Special Mention: ***What the Old Moon Tells***

d. Eliza Plocieniak-Alvarez, p. Carol Ratajczak, Blaue Pampelmuse, Germany

Jury statement: The project gives voice to a minority and has the potential to travel across countries thanks to its unique storytelling and visuals.

Special Mention: ***Starting with Hope***

d. Sonia Velvien, p. Kèota Dengmanara, Moukda Production, France

Jury statement: An ambitious project with a developable media concept that tackles a sensitive topic. It earns the special mention for its mission to contribute to a delicate conversation through the powerful language of animation.

CATEGORY SHORT FILMS

Jury members: Nikki Loke, Richard Valk, Wim Vanacker

Winner: ***Ibis***

d. Maria Burgues, Enric Sant, p. Maria Burgues, BLISS PICTURES, Spain

Jury statement: John Cale put it best, fear is a man's best friend, and it takes courage to confront those fears, especially as a teenager. What starts off as a carefree afternoon in the sun, ends up being an introspective, very idiosyncratic, vibrant journey into uncharted territory. What draws us in is the humanity and the simplicity of the setup. What we want to applaud is the gentle and imaginative hand with which this has been tackled. Style is what it takes, and style is what it's got. The award for the best short animation project goes to IBIS by Maria Burgues and Enric Sant. Congratulations!

Special Mention: ***Patrick in Town***

d. Eszter Sandor, Valentina Huckova, p. Valentina Huckova, Young Glass Noodle, Slovakia

Jury statement: We're talking quirky here and over the top; we're talking politically incorrect and far fetched, but as we all know, a bit of crazy takes us a long way, and so does a happy cow. When Patrick's in town,

fun and funky awaits and that we'll gladly embrace. And the special mention goes to *Patrick in Town* by Valentina Huckova and Eszter Sandor! Congratulations and hail to all those vegans out there!!

CATEGORY XR

Jury members: Mike Jelinek, Zillah Watson, Xinran Yuan

Winner: ***Finding Frida***

d. Hilde Kristin Kjøs, p. Bjørn-Morten Nerland, Stargate Media AS, Norway

Jury statement: We are delighted to nominate *Finding Frida* for the XR award, a project that highlights the life and work of artist Frida Hansen. We were impressed by the imaginative VR native approach to storytelling, which truly plays to the strengths of the medium. Considerable thought had been given to the role of the audience in the story and to incorporating meaningful interactivity to add to the magic. Taking the aesthetic lead from Frida's tapestries will allow people to dive deep inside her art and mind. The strong team behind Frida have come up with a way to tell this story that will have broad human appeal, and we wish them success.

CATEGORY RISING STARS

Jury members: Torben Meier, Lana Tankosa Nikolič, Joseph Wallace.

Winner: ***Desire to Win***

d. Michaela Rezova, p. Zuzana Bukovinska, Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague, Czech Republic

Jury statement: Here we witnessed a real filmmaker. Someone who shows competence and skill in all aspects of the form: the use of interview, archive footage, sound, image and motion. The director has cleverly chosen animation to tackle this particular subject matter about the renowned but also somewhat controversial artist. Michaela shows great respect and empathy for the subject and passion for the project, which is indeed needed in order to finalize this ambitious project.

Special Mention: ***The Last Drop***

d. Anna Tokes, p. Jozsef Fulop, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest – MOME, Hungary

Jury statement: This project demonstrates beautiful and sensitive use of animation to convey the duality of the aesthetic performance versus physical and psychological hardship. With strong stylized visuals that mirror the sport she is portraying, Anna tells a personal story rooted in her own experiences.

AUDIENCE AWARD

The audience was also asked to vote. Over 1000 votes were registered across all pitching categories. The animated feature project **Vast Blue Antarctica** (d. Christos Panagos, p. Charalambos Margaritis, Kimonos Animation Studio, Cyprus) has received 219 votes, the highest vote rate surpassing 4.2 (out of 5) and wins the **Audience Award** of EUR 1,000.

CEE ANIMATION WORKSHOP – free scholarship

Winner: **Dreamworld**

d. Veljko Popovic, Milivoj Popovic, p. Milivoj Popovic, Veljko Popovic, Prime Render d.o.o., Croatia

ANIMATION SANS FRONTIERES – free scholarship

Winner: director **Miha Reja**, *Kurent* (p. Bostjan Potokar, School of Arts – University of Nova Gorica, Slovenia)

Statement: We are delighted to announce that for the strong style and interesting technical pipeline of his project, for the clear vision and very good pitch and obvious personal dedication, we, the Animation Sans Frontieres partners, are very happy to award Miha Reja the CEE Animation Forum 2021 ASF prize, which will consist of a full scholarship to the 2021/2022 programme, starting in October this year at the Akademie Baden-Württemberg. Congratulations again Miha, we are looking forward to meeting you and working with you together.

CARTOON MOVIE – direct access

Winner: **Dreamworld**

d. Veljko Popovic, Milivoj Popovic, p. Milivoj Popovic, Veljko Popovic, Prime Render d.o.o., Croatia

Winner: **Vast Blue Antarctica**

d. Christos Panagos, p. Charalambos Margaritis, Kimonos Animation Studio, Cyprus

CARTOON FORUM – direct access

Winner: **Robot and the Martians**

d. Tomasz Niedzwiedz, p. Tomasz Paziewski, Badi Badi, Poland

CARTOON SPRINGBOARD – direct access

Winner: **Rosie and Sapphire**

d. Anna Katalin Lovrity, p. Balint Gelley, CUB Animation, Hungary

Winner: **Senior Crush**

d. Orsolya Richolm, p. Andrea Ausztrics, ULab Kft, Hungary

CICLIC AWARD

Winner: **Electra. A Poem**

d. Daria Kashcheeva, p. Zuzana Krivkova, FAMU, MAUR film, Czech Republic

Statement: The pitch we would like to honour today served as evidence; experience to dive into the deep feelings and memories of a young woman who has to deal with relationships. The teaser was a promise of poetry, complex narration, a brilliant sense of directing and a bright combination of techniques. The prize goes to the film *Electra. A Poem* by Daria Kascheeva, produced by FAMU and MAUR film.

ANIMOND AWARD

Winner: **The Olive Bunch**

d. Magnus Kravik, p. Maria Pavlou, Pixel giants, Cyprus

KIDS KINO INDUSTRY AWARD

Winner: **The Olive Bunch**

d. Magnus Kravik, p. Maria Pavlou, Pixel giants, Cyprus

ANIMARKT AWARD

Winner: **The Icebreakers**

d. Ignas Meilūnas, p. Justė Beniušytė, Kadru Skyrius, Lithuania

Statement: For a simple but not naive story about fundamental values.

Winner: **Desire to Win**

d. Michaela Rezova, p. Zuzana Bukovinska, Academy of Arts, Architecture & Design in Prague, Czech Republic

Statement: For an interesting approach, for documentary and animation.

In addition to the cash prizes, all jury winners together with the Audience awarded project will be presented at the special CEE Animation pitching presentation, which will be part of the official MIFA 2021 programme.

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foundations and professional organisations from Slovenia (DSAF, Slovene Animated Film Association), Czech Republic (ASAF, Association of Czech Animation), Hungary (HAPA, Hungarian Animation Producers Association), Poland (SPPA, Polish Animation Producers Association) and Slovakia (APAF, Slovak Association of Animated Film Producers). CEE Animation Forum is organized in co-operation with Eurimages.

Selected projects – pitches, visuals, team, synopsis:

<https://ceeanimation.eu/forum/2021-cee-animation-forum/selected-projects>

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