

17th ifva Animation Category Jury Meeting Minutes

Jury Member in Attendance: Lo Che-ying (LO), Felix Ip (IP), Eddy Wong(WONG), Yu Ka-ho(YU), Tamas Waliczky(WALICZKY)

Organizer Representatives: Teresa Kwong (KWONG), Kattie Fan (FAN)

KWONG: Today is the award panel meeting. This year we received about 50 works for the animation category. We had our first round back in December; three of you reviewed all of the entries and selected the 10 finalists. Today we have one more jury member, Felix, to join us in choosing the award winners for this category. The emphasis for our competition is independent spirit and creativity. The prize distribution for this category is as follows, one Gold Award, one Silver Award and one Special Mention. Let's proceed to discuss the merits of each individual work and we will begin with **Origin**.

LO: Nice work, very artistic. The animation work is very good but the idea is a little bit "traditional". The performance is very good; especially the drawings are simple but beautiful.

IP: I think overall the concept is pretty complete. I like the voice-over, the dialogue and the music. I am not sure about the drawing style; it could have been done better. The use of color pencil doing the whole animation seems a bit "dirty".

YU: I agree with both of you. Overall it is very well done, neatly done, perhaps too neat. I think it lacks surprise in terms of its style and story. It is nice but it is a little bit dull.

WALICZKY: I like it too; it is very nice animation. I like the voice-over and the drawings, but to me the story is not really original.

KWONG: We will proceed to discuss **Within Within**.

LO: It is very nice work. The idea is very interesting especially for Hong Kong people. It is talking about the identity of Hong Kong people in the past and in the future from the perspective of a 2nd or 3rd generation person from Hong Kong. The presentation is very good both in style and in the animation work. Very simple action but it works very well. It posed many questions for the audience to think about.

IP: Actually I am quite impressed by this piece of work. For the content it is talking about identity of everyone; the style is very simple but very impressive. I think the voice-over helped a lot in bringing the emotion out.

YU: I like this piece of work. I think the monotonic voice-over is intentionally tone-down and creates an interesting tension with the visuals. I really like the point when the music starts; it starts at the end at exactly where the climax is supposed to be. That is like the orgasm. It holds up all the emotions until the end then releases and it is beautiful.

WALICZKY: This was my favorite work from the very beginning. I like it very much. It made a big impression on me. In terms of the sound and the visual I think it is technically well made. I also like the animation very much. You keep thinking about this whole issue after seeing the film and it leaves a deep impression, not in a pathetic way. It is well made.

- IP: I like the mirror in the end with some colors, the goldfish shot and the oil painting towards the end.
- WALICZKY: I appreciate the use of different techniques and they are used nicely.
- KWONG: We will proceed to discuss *Lying in the Sky*.
- LO: I think this piece of work is quite ambitious. With the longest playing (close to 30 minutes) in this category, this entry is very good technically but I am not moved by its storytelling. I like the combination of colors and certain angles but they do not enhance the storytelling.
- IP: After seeing the first few shots, I had high expectation going in. The color and the tone are very good. I feel the story can be shorter; the pacing in the middle was difficult to follow. There were some nice moments when the boy with wings tried to learn how to fly. The structure was decent but there were some problems with editing as I lost the focus of the story. I like the use of colors in some scenes and the painting in the backdrop. But I felt a bit bored in the middle.
- WALICZKY: It was also too long for me; I like the colors as well. But from the drama point of view, sometimes it was very illogical. Things happened only because of the concept but made little sense otherwise. Why did the boy disappear from the hospital and go to the sea? Somebody has to be more careful with these logical consequences and I would appreciate more if the artist tries to follow the logic of the character or the story than assigning a logic to the story. Perhaps the message is too strong and is not told perfectly.
- YU: You actually raised a good point that I did not realize until you mentioned it. Things did not happen with a very convincing reason and that was why I lost focus while watching it. I could follow the story but was not very motivated. The combination of colors and the design is nice. I think the style stands out but is not unique, for it seems to have many references to other films that I have seen before.
- IP: I have seen that kind of color scheme many times before.
- KWONG: Let's proceed to discuss *Oh! Give Me Strength*.
- LO: Nice little work for a stop motion animation. At the climax, she does not work much animation and does not put much effort on the eating of the animals. At first he eats the turtle but later on the food just disappears in front of his mouth. Why does she waste the transformation? It is not so difficult to do so since the food is made of clay. Of course we know the idea but it is a little bit incomplete.
- IP: I agree with that. I like the setup, the background, the tone and the green. But it feels like a commercial for saving animals. When the character eats something, I expect something should come up like his muscle would get bigger. Maybe this is a way to save time. Some of the scenes in the end were pretty funny with animal baker and strange animal. I expected the character to change once he eats more but it never happened. I like the visuals but there is a lack of change in the tone and the lighting.
- YU: I actually have no problem with the jump cut of the eating part as it was kind of fun, but I agree with you that there was lack of fulfillment to my anticipation. I was expecting to see some transformation in the end. Come to think of it, perhaps it was done intentionally. I

like the overall design and the mood but what really put me off was the message in the end, it was like an educational video.

WALICZKY: I was very impressed when it started; it was really beautiful, enlightened and the puppets, it was really a professional work. Maybe that was the problem; the expectation was built very high in the beginning. Maybe the director did not have enough time or enough patience to finish it at the same level. This educational message could be the secret way to say this is my reason to make this film. The puppets were very well-made. I agree with all of you that the end was not as good as expected based on the beginning, somehow the standard just dropped. But I think this director definitely has talent in stop motion image.

YU: Looking at the images, not only are they very designed, they are almost atmospheric. I wonder how she did the visuals.

KWONG: Let's proceed to discuss **MR. WORK**.

LO: It is interesting and very Hong Kong. The script is very complicated and the dialogue is interesting. Technically it works but it lacks something in creativity. The focus is on the dialogue and the characters are good but I expect more; it does not feel like a complete work, more like a segment. I am not very interested in the content even though it is very Hong Kong.

IP: Visual-wise I like this one a lot, the character design is nice. The background has a distinct Hong Kong flavor with the café restaurant. When I heard the first dialogue, the Cantonese does not quite match the character. I would rather have less dialogue. The message is very simple, strong and straightforward but does not give the audience much room for imagination.

YU: As a Cantonese speaker, I think the director tries to be funny but it was not that funny to me. There was a contrived feeling and what really put me off were the dialogue and the content. I just did not find it funny.

WALICZKY: I like the background very much and it is a realistic portrait of Hong Kong. Usually I like someone who can speak about his or her environment. The animation is professional but I did not find the story funny either and that was my problem. I do appreciate the local elements in this film.

KWONG: Let's proceed to discuss **Run Island Run**.

LO: I like this one, it is very nice work. I like the design, the animation, the characters and the colors. The mood of the story is changing sometimes but there are some moving moments. I like this piece of work.

WALICZKY: I like the idea and sometimes I like the animation/visual idea. Again my problem was with the sometimes illogical nature of the story. I had the impression that things happened this way only because the director wanted it that way.

YU: My first impression was that it looked like something that I had seen before, perhaps the story from the bible about Jonah being swallowed by a whale. Visually it was well done and there were a few shots that I remembered well, such as the underwater shot with the

whale approaching the protagonist. Other than that it did not leave a strong impression on me.

LO: Some of the similarities with other works that we just talked about, such as a person being stranded in a deserted island, come across as a parody to me.

IP: After reading the synopsis, I could sense what the story would be about before seeing it and hence I was not very motivated. I like the first wide shot in the opening scene and most of the wide shots. For some reasons the level of animation seems somewhat inconsistent. I did not really enjoy the ending, for I was expecting something bigger or more touching to happen.

KWONG: Let's proceed to discuss ***Sub-Zero***.

YU: It is a very nice music video. It is nicely done but like many other works, it did not leave a strong impression on me.

LO: Actually it is not a MTV but it works like a MTV with one song that goes on throughout the entire film. Since the story is all imaginary, the director could do whatever he wants; it is not so difficult to do and it is just visually interesting. It did not leave a deep impression on me.

WALICZKY: I like this work. I find the story of traveling in the MTR with strange dreams and big monsters interesting. The way how the story moved into these dreams was quite strong. These were nice logical movements that brought you into the crazy dreams of monsters. The monster thing was not my cup of tea but overall it was well made. The music works well and the animation sometimes is quite well made as well. The directors put a lot of energy into this piece of work.

IP: I like the style of this work, namely the use of colors in the beginning. The buildup is pretty good going into the crazy imaginary world. The ending, however, did not live up to my expectation. I really appreciate the loop animation in the imaginary world. Yet I did not really understand the ending.

YU: I like a lot of short moments. I actually like the ending not because it has anything to do with the story but I appreciate its style and mood, especially when the person is sinking into the deep sea. That is a nice shot. There are some really nice shots by themselves but they do not seem to make too much sense when being put together in a sequence. I think the directors have great potentials but this is not really a narrative piece, so I cannot say much about the storytelling. It works well as a music video. The only thing I would pick on is the sound as it seems abrupt. The treatment of the sound is a bit crude.

LO: No sound effect at all, just one song flowing throughout the film.

KWONG: Let's proceed to discuss ***The-Zoo-Walk-CAT n FISH***.

IP: The music, the content and the visuals do not seem to fit well together. They all seem to be done separately and lack cohesion together. It did not really impress me.

WALICZKY: I was not impressed either. My impression of this piece was that the director did not want any more and did not put in the efforts to do something original or interesting. The

director merely just put things together; the visual style is not bad but there is nothing that really stands out.

YU: I agree with most of what you said. One thing that really bugged me was the color; it was all shifted to one tone. I have no problem with color like that but this seems like an accident. Everything was too yellow. The music was interesting. I do not have a strong impression of this work but I like its illustration of the buildings. Unfortunately it was shot in such bad lighting and the color being shifted; that made the work a lot less impressive.

KWONG: Let's proceed to discuss **GALAMAN**.

IP: It is the most entertaining piece of work by far. It is very professional; it gives you punch lines, jokes and puns with local elements. It also has many references to Japanese superhero animation. I find it very fun to watch.

YU: You may not understand it; this work plays a lot on the puns. For instance the word "Gala" sounds like armpit in Cantonese. It was fun. I find many references to perverseness in Japanese comic as well. I find it entertaining but I also have this contradicted feeling while watching it. I find it a bit too calculated and strategic to make you laugh. It does not come off naturally and that put me off a bit.

LO: The pattern is the same. It begins with the characters and their names are some verbal gags. There is a certain formula with the intention to make you laugh. If you like the formula, you would find it funny. If you do not like the formula, it can be a problem.

IP: We can see there is a certain formula. The first part was funny, the second part I was not so impressed with but the final part was hilarious as well.

WALICZKY: It is funny and well made. But my problem is that it is strictly professional; in most of the works we can see a person behind them, but in **GALAMAN**, we see no one behind it, but only a strategy to make you laugh. This is not really sympathetic to me. The repetitive formula seems to provide a very narrow range.

KWONG: Let's proceed to discuss **Demon Kills**.

YU: I really like it. I like the visual style, its pacing and almost everything except the voice-over seems a bit amateurish.

LO: The style and the animation work very well. Not so difficult to do. I have seen this kind of style in comic books and independent films a lot recently. More or less the same.

IP: The style is familiar and is widely used lately. I like the animation, the treatment of the characters and the use of loose lines. Story-wise I could not gather all the symbolic meanings when the teachers and classmates became the demons and the protagonist began fighting them.

YU: My interpretation is that this is a story told through a disillusioned mind or a mentally ill person who killed himself. The story is told backward from his point of view.

WALICZKY: I like the animation and the storytelling but not the sound as it seems amateurish. To me it is not so original for I have seen something similar before. It is well made but not an exceptional piece.

KWONG: We have just managed to get a hold of another jury member, Eddy Wong, on the phone and he is going to comment briefly on the 10 finalists and his top 3 picks for awards. Meanwhile please take some time and come up with your top 3 picks for this category.

WONG: I will begin with **Origin**; the drawings are decent but a bit raw. The story is interesting but not exceptional. **Within Within** has great drawing techniques. **Lying in the Sky** needs to improve its storytelling but the story is interesting with decent drawings. **Oh! Give Me Strength** has an interesting story but overall it seems a bit raw. **MR. WORK** has decent drawings but the story is not as interesting. **Run Island Run** is just so so. **Sub-Zero** reminds of Japanese animations. **The-Zoo-Walk-CAT n FISH** has a distinct MTV flavor and I am sure the producers really enjoy making it. My favorite is **GALAMAN** since it is highly creative and humorous. **Demon Kills** is an expression of personal feelings that I have seen before. My pick for Gold Award is **GALAMAN** since it is a product of its times and it is humorous. My pick for Silver Award goes to **Lying in the Sky** and my picks for Special Mention go to **Origin** and **Sub-zero**.

KWONG: Eddy has just given us his picks. Now we can proceed to discuss your picks.

Eddy: **GALAMAN** (Gold), **Lying in the Sky** (Silver), **Origin** and **Sub-zero** (Special Mention)

WALICZKY: My picks are as follows, **Within Within** (Gold), **Origin** (Silver), "**GALAMAN** (Special Mention).

YU: My picks are as follows, **Within Within** (Gold), **Demon Kills** (Silver), **Oh! Give Me Strength** (Special Mention).

LO: My picks are as follows, **Within Within** (Gold), **Demon Kills** (Silver), **Lying in the Sky** and **GALAMAN** (Special Mention).

IP: My picks are as follows, **Within Within** (Gold), **GALAMAN**, **Oh! Give Me Strength** (in no specific order).

KWONG: So we have nominated 7 works for award considerations, does that mean we could leave out **MR. WORK**, **Run Island Run** and **The-Zoo-Walk-Cat n FISH** for consideration?

WALICZKY: Yes, for award consideration.

KWONG: **Within Within** receives 4 votes and will receive the Gold Award. What about the Silver Award?

LO: **Demon Kills** seems a better fit with the independent spirit that we celebrate for this festival whereas **GALAMAN** seems more commercial and more fitting for the Special Mention.

WALICZKY: As I said before **GALAMAN** is very professional and funny; my experience is that it is not easy to make a film that make the public laugh. Whereas **Demon Kills** is a more serious film but not that original. So I will vote for **GALAMAN** for Silver.

IP: **GALAMAN** is unique and special to me whereas **Demon Kills** is more artistic. I have to say I prefer **GALAMAN**.

- YU: **GALAMAN** is not my favorite even though I enjoy watching it. The only thing that put me off was its calculated intention whereas **Demon Kills** feels more authentic even though it seems familiar in terms of style, I could sense something that comes from within.
- WALICZKY: Despite its calculated professionalism, I appreciate the certain knowledge behind **GALAMAN**. It is not just the animation is good or the knowledge of how to make funny sequence. But there is a defined connection to the older Japanese animation. The director clearly knows what he wants to achieve. This is quite rare and I like it very much. I appreciate this kind of cleverness and professionalism and again it is very difficult to make humorous animation. This is why I find **GALAMAN** superior to **Demon Kills**.
- YU: If you weigh between personal authenticity and the things that you just mentioned, the clear direction and professionalism that are found in **GALAMAN**, I would have no trouble in accepting the outcome. I put a lot of focus on authenticity and whether it comes from within the director, but I did not pay much attention to the professionalism, references to other cultures and the vision that the director had. I would agree with you that the director has a clear vision in what he wants to achieve in **GALAMAN** even though its style is not my cup of tea.
- IP: Sometimes the impression is that film festival always favors artistic films. Perhaps we can change that impression if we pick **GALAMAN** and show that our festival can embrace local culture and diversity.
- WALICZKY: Usually I would agree with you and value personal message over everything else. For these festivals, we should embrace something that is not seen in commercial films. But in this case, the knowledge and professionalism of **GALAMAN** appears to have something heavier than **Demon Kills**.
- KWONG: So the Silver Award goes to **GALAMAN**, now we proceed to discuss the Special Mention award.
- WALICZKY: I think it should go to "Demon Kills" since it nearly misses out on the Silver Award.
- IP: Do we have any other works worthy of consideration or other message that we would like to send out?
- LO: What about **Lying in the sky**? The director can do better if we can give him some encouragement.
- YU: Perhaps we should look at the potential of the director. The director can do a better job next time if we can give the director some encouragement.
- IP: It is a difficult decision. **Lying in the sky** can be done better in my view. But I think I will go with **Demon Kills** since it is a more complete work.
- YU: I have no problem with that as well.
- KWONG: That concludes our discussion for this category. Gold Award goes to **Within Within**, Silver Award goes to **GALAMAN** and Special Mention goes to **Demon Kills**.

Animation Category

Gold Award

Within Within

Sharon LIU

Silver Award

GALAMAN

LAU Kwun-yiu, Johnee

Special Mention

Demon Kills

MAK Ying-ping