

Artist-Centered Design for Feature Animation

Jordan Wild
awildjojo@gmail.com
Blue Sky Studios
USA

Fatima Anes
fatima.anes@disneyanimation.com
Walt Disney Animation Studios
USA

Jason Kim
jmk@pixar.com
Pixar Animation Studios
USA

Seehyun Kim
seehyun.kim@dreamworks.com
DreamWorks Animation
USA

Sally Kong*
kongsally94@gmail.com
Blue Sky Studios
USA

ABSTRACT

Product designers from Disney, Pixar, Blue Sky, and DreamWorks Animation discuss the challenges of designing proprietary software for feature animation production, why UX design is necessary for studios that build their own tools, and how it has impacted their studios.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing** → **User centered design**.

KEYWORDS

animation, design, interaction, pipeline, production, tools

ACM Reference Format:

Jordan Wild, Fatima Anes, Jason Kim, Seehyun Kim, and Sally Kong. 2021. Artist-Centered Design for Feature Animation. In *Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques Conference (SIGGRAPH '21 Panels)*, August 09-13, 2021. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 2 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3450617.3464504>

1 INTRODUCTION

Great UX design in feature animation studios increases empathy and generates consensus between artists, developers, management, and studio leadership to overcome the challenges of each feature film and set the vision for future technologies. Product designers from Disney, Pixar, Blue Sky, and DreamWorks Animation discuss the challenges of designing proprietary software for feature animation production, why UX design is necessary for studios who build their own tools, and how it has impacted their studios.

UX designers at these studios face a range of challenges. Their methods must be flexible and quickly adapt to production needs, their designs must balance technical complexity with the creative needs of artists, and their resources are often limited compared to the scale and pace of production demands. This panel is for any

*Panel moderator

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SIGGRAPH '21 Panels, August 09-13, 2021, Virtual Event, USA
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ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-8370-7/21/08.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3450617.3464504>

animation-minded attendee such as developers, artists, management, studio leadership, and other designers interested in discussing UX design for animation production tools.

Topics for the panelists to discuss will include:

- The benefits of UX design methodology and process in feature animation, and how perception of those benefits have changed over time.
- How UX design got started in each studio. As a related topic, how to sell the value of UX design to studio leadership – and what to do if you can't.
- How each studio integrates UX design with their development processes and balances speed, conflicting priorities, technical and design debt, and meeting artist needs.
- How UX design influences the vision for future technology at each studio. As a related topic, how design from other industries can influence our work.
- Questions from the audience.

2 PANELISTS

Jason Kim leads UX design and application framework engineering at Pixar Animation Studios. He's worked in various roles in R&D and production at Pixar over the past 15 years, contributing heavily to the Presto Animation System, establishing the camera capture and virtual production pipeline, and supporting Sparkshorts and various other projects at the studio.

Jordan Wild was a product designer at Blue Sky Studios and has over 10 years of experience in the animation industry in various technical roles. They collaborated on cross-functional teams of engineers, artists, and production management to create the tools and workflows artists need to succeed. They introduced UX design to the studio and managed the entire design pipeline from generative research to final prototype.

Fatima Anes is an HCI Product Designer at Walt Disney Animation Studios. Over the past 14 years, she has worked in education, games, esports, and animation. She supports user research, design, and the creation of proprietary tools; empowering artists to work more efficiently and effectively in the Animation and Production pipeline.

Seehyun Kim is a designer who has been focusing on turning complex problems into solutions in different industries including Animation, Automation control, and Audio/Video. Seehyun joined DreamWorks Animation as their first UX designer and built a design team. She has been integral in driving product strategy and defining their development process. Seehyun holds a Master's degree

in Human-Computer Interaction Design from Indiana University Bloomington.

3 MODERATOR

Sally Kong was a Lead Technical Director at Blue Sky Studios specializing in lighting and compositing workflows and tool development. For the past 4 years, she has collaborated with product designers, artists, engineers, and CG supervisors to prioritize, design,

and implement technical solutions for various shows' challenges. Previously, Sally got her bachelor's in Digital Media Design and master's in Robotics at the University of Pennsylvania, where she was also the co-president of the Women in Computer Science club for which she coordinated and moderated multiple educational and career panels.