

# *La mort n'existe pas* (Death Does Not Exist) and *Il burattino e la balena* take top prizes at OIAF 2025

*From contemporary fables to wild humour, this year's Ottawa International Animation Festival winners reflect the bold, global imagination guiding animation forward in our troubled times.*

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 8:30 PM ET ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2025**

**OTTAWA, ON, September 27, 2025** —The **Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF)** has awarded *La mort n'existe pas* (*Death Does Not Exist*) (dir. **Félix Dufour-Laperrière**) the **Grand Prize for Feature Animation** and *Il burattino e la balena* (dir. Roberto Catani) the **Grand Prize for Short Animation**. All awards were announced at the Festival's Awards Ceremony on September 27, 2025, at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

*La mort n'existe pas* (*Death Does Not Exist*), the latest from acclaimed Québec animator and filmmaker Dufour-Laperrière (*Archipel*, *Ville Neuve*), made its festival debut earlier this year as a part of the Cannes Directors' Fortnight selection. The film's dreamlike visuals explore the consequences of strong convictions in a world flooded with moral ambiguity.

With its win at OIAF, *Il burattino e la balena* qualifies for the Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film category. The OIAF 2025 Grand Prize winner tells the journey of a puppet discovering its humanity, echoing Pinocchio but with Catani's signature emotional depth and visual poetry.

This year's **CFI Award for Best Canadian Animation** winner, *La jeune fille qui pleurait des perles* (*The Girl Who Cried Pearls*) (dirs. Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski), showcases the Academy-nominated duo's stop-motion talents and storytelling. The **Hélène Tanguay Award for Humour** was awarded to *Poor Marciano* (dir. Alex Rey) for its humorous character study.

Exploring the construction of masculinity through a man's journey of dealing with hair loss and his relationship with his barber, *S the Wolf* (dir. Sameh Alaa) won the **Wacom Public Prize**. Alaa also receives a Movink 13 drawing tablet courtesy of Wacom as a part of the award. *Rakugaki* (*The Graffiti*) (dir. Ryo Orikasa) won the **Animation Mentor Best Narrative Short Award** for bringing the poetry of Makoto Takayanagi to life.

The OIAF welcomed the expertise of **Winston Hacking** (Canada), **Gina Kamentsky** (USA), **Magdalena Zira** (Cyprus), **Miriam Kandelaki** (Georgia), **Chris Lavis** (Canada) and **Honami Yano** (Japan) as jurors for this year's Official Competition. The Kids Jury, made up of

Ottawa-area children ages 8 to 12, selected the winners of the Young Audiences 7+ competition. The Teen Audiences 13+ competition was decided by the Teen Vote public prize.

In keeping with tradition, the OIAF 2025 award statues were designed by Ottawa-based scrap metal artist **Tick Tock Tom**. The statues are working phénakisticopes featuring an animation by New York artist **George Griffin**.

## **The Complete Competition Prize Winner List**

### **Grand Prize for Short Animation**

Winner: *Il burattino e la balena* (dir. Roberto Catani)

Jury Comment: For the Grand Prize for Short Animation, we selected this film for its ability to work with image, movement and sound in equal partnership while leaving room for the viewer to engage with its ideas. The film works with an iconic character to pose important questions about conformity and society while remaining open-ended in its approach. Everything in this film is essential, with the film employing an inventive use of animation and sound to immerse the viewer in an unforgettable experience.

### **Grand Prize for Animated Feature**

Winner: *La mort n'existe pas* (*Death Does Not Exist*) (dir. Félix Dufour-Laperrière)

Jury Comment: An exploration of the personal cost of our convictions through sublime animation in which the presence of the natural world adds a second layer of poetic weight and profound meaning.

Honourable Mention: *La gran historia de la filosofía occidental* (*The Great History of Western Philosophy*) (dir. Aria Covamonas)

Jury Comment: From a unique perspective and visionary director, a challenging film that deserves its day of honour in the great Dadaist tradition.

### **Wacom Public Prize**

Winner: *S the Wolf* (dir. Sameh Alaa)

### **CFI Award for Best Canadian Animation**

Winner: *La jeune fille qui pleurait des perles* (*The Girl Who Cried Pearls*) (dirs. Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski)

Comment: For its extraordinary animation and its startling fairy tale narrative, which combines a searing, astute critique of human greed with a plea for love and personal integrity, the Canadian Film Institute Award for Best Canadian Animation goes to *The Girl Who Cried Pearls*, by Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski.

Honourable Mention: *We're Kinda Different* (dir. Ben Meinhardt)

Comment: For its clever, entertaining, and impassioned affirmation of difference as a source of strength, an Honourable Mention goes to *We're Kinda Different*, by Ben Meinhardt.

### **Hélène Tanguay Award for Humour**

Winner: *Poor Marciano* (dir. Alex Rey)

Comment: Hélène loved to laugh, and this award crowns a film whose humour matches her irreverent spirit. While there were—thankfully—more comic films than usual this year, it was very clear to us which film we could imagine Hélène laughing her ass off at. Who on earth thought to combine astrophysics, masturbation, and a one-hit Canadian band that we all—well, at least I do—love to hate, the Crash Test Dummies (I mean, who the hell can be so obsessed with one band?) into one of the most pleasantly strange and hilarious character studies?

## **Animated Short Competition - Category Prizes**

### **ASIFA International 65th Anniversary Best Non-Narrative Award**

Winner: *Green Lung* (dir. Simon Hamlyn)

Jury Comment: We loved how this film used colour, sound and inventive technique to engulf the viewer in its world. The filmmaker demonstrates how experimental animation can lead to surprising outcomes.

### **Animation Mentor Best Narrative Short Award**

Winner: *Rakugaki* (*The Graffiti*) (dir. Ryo Orikasa)

Jury Comment: This film immediately transported us into a story about the disintegration of language. It employs multiple techniques in the representation of a city, which becomes

language and then loses it. It left us with the question - what is consciousness without language?

### **Best Commissioned Animation**

Winner: *Desi Oon* (dir. Suresh Eriyat)

Jury Comment: We loved this film for its playful use of materials, creating an unapologetically over-the-top musical centred on an unassuming subject.

### **Bento Box Award for Best Student Animation**

Winner: *Anklebones* (dir. Nicole Altan)

Jury Comment: This film takes a self-assured approach to exploring a subject related directly to the filmmaker's heritage. It employs plasticity of line and works with inventive forms, immersing us in an immediate experience

### **TVPaint Canadian Student Award**

Winner: *Lullaby for a Deathdream* (dir. Charlie Galea-McClure)

Comment: A lyrical meditation on saltwater and remembrance—an atmosphere-driven work whose mixed-media textures linger like a final breath.

Honourable Mention: *Music in My Pocket* (dir. Veronika Kostyuk)

Comment: A beautifully made, surprisingly mature sand animation skimming an old musician's memories—growth, exploration, love, passion, war, creation—flashing past with the breathless speed of a life

Honourable Mention: *When the Moon Sings* (dir. Jesu Medina)

Comment: Ambitious, mysterious, and haunting—poetic, with a tinge of the theatrical.

### **Animation for Teen Audiences 13+ Competition**

Winner: *Autokar* (dir. Sylwia Szkiładź)

## **Animation for Young Audiences 7+ Competition**

Winner: *Les bottes de la nuit* (*The Night Boots*) (dir. Pierre-Luc Granjon)

Honourable Mention: *Omedodeedu* (*Edu's Fear*) (dirs. Bruno Mazzilli and Tiago Judas)

## **Animated Series Competition**

Winner: *Eggland* (dirs. Cole Kush and Christopher Rutledge)

Comment: For its striking design that mirrors its protagonists' awkward stillness and for championing an older perspective too often overlooked. With a deliberately languid tempo, it reflects a community's slow, fractured fade—days blur, time slips, the world feels like a waiting room to the afterlife.

Honourable Mention: *Common Side Effects* 'Pilot' (dir. Camille Bozec)

Comment: For its deft mix of deadpan and absurdist comedy and its timely critique of a corrupt, profit-over-people system

## **Animated Short Competition - Craft Awards**

### **Best Script**

Winner: *S the Wolf* (dir. Sameh Alaa)

Jury Comment: Truthful, funny, carried by a brutal honesty and an unspoken love communicated through insult. It felt fucking real. The animation doesn't get in the way here; it allowed the story to shine.

### **Best Design**

Winner: 海星, 乌鸦, 独角兽 (*Crow, Starfish, and Unicorn*) (dir. Xiaoxuan Han)

Jury Comment: Our selection built a story with its own logic coming directly from the design of its characters. The result was surprising, emotionally engaging and otherworldly.

## **XPPen Craft Award Prize for Best Animation Technique**

Winner: *Fusion* (dir. Richard Reeves)

Jury Comment: For the XPPen Craft Award Prize for Best Animation Technique, the jury selected a film with a perfect assemblage of sound, movement and colour activating the imagination.

### **Best Sound Design**

Winner: *Evacuations* (dir. Lilli Carré)

Jury Comment: Sound creates the physical experience in film, moving from its source directly to the body. Our selection employs sound playfully juxtaposed with image and movement to create a whole stronger than its individual parts.

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### **About the Ottawa International Animation Festival**

The Ottawa International Animation Festival (OIAF) is one of the world's leading animation events, and it has provided screenings, exhibits, workshops, and entertainment since 1976. Attracting artists, producers, students and animation fans from around the globe, the OIAF brings together art and industry to experience world-class animated works. This year's OIAF runs from September 24 to September 28. Visit the OIAF [website](#) for more information about this year's festival.

For additional information, [accreditation](#), interviews, press materials, and photos, please contact:

**Christina Frolova-Gregory**, Communications Manager

Email: [christina@animationfestival.ca](mailto:christina@animationfestival.ca)

[Media Kit](#)