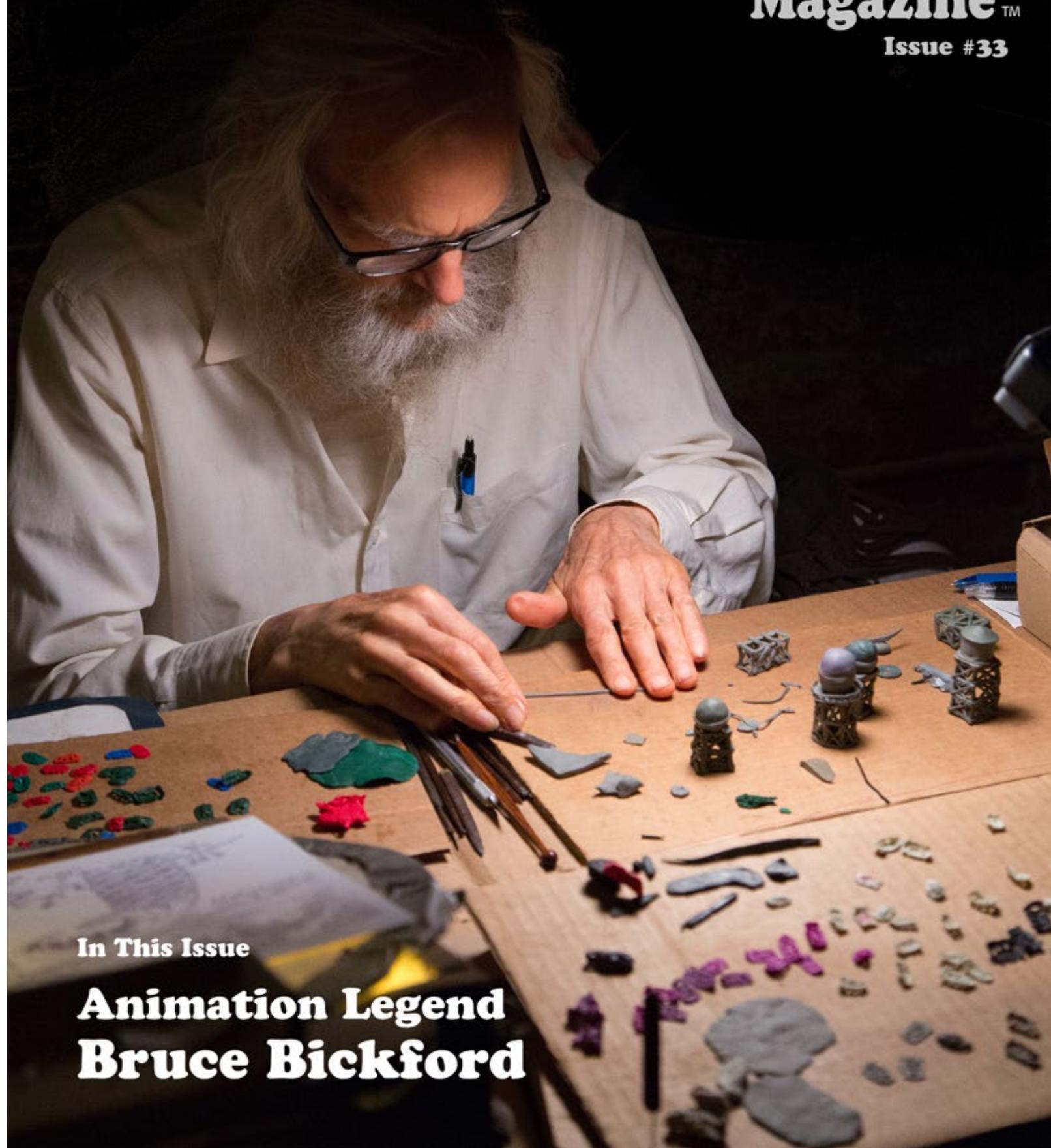


Stop Motion

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Bruce Bickford**

Stop Motion Magazine™

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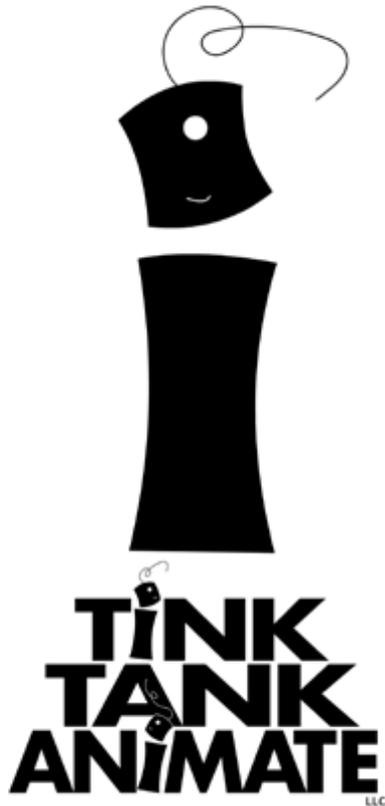
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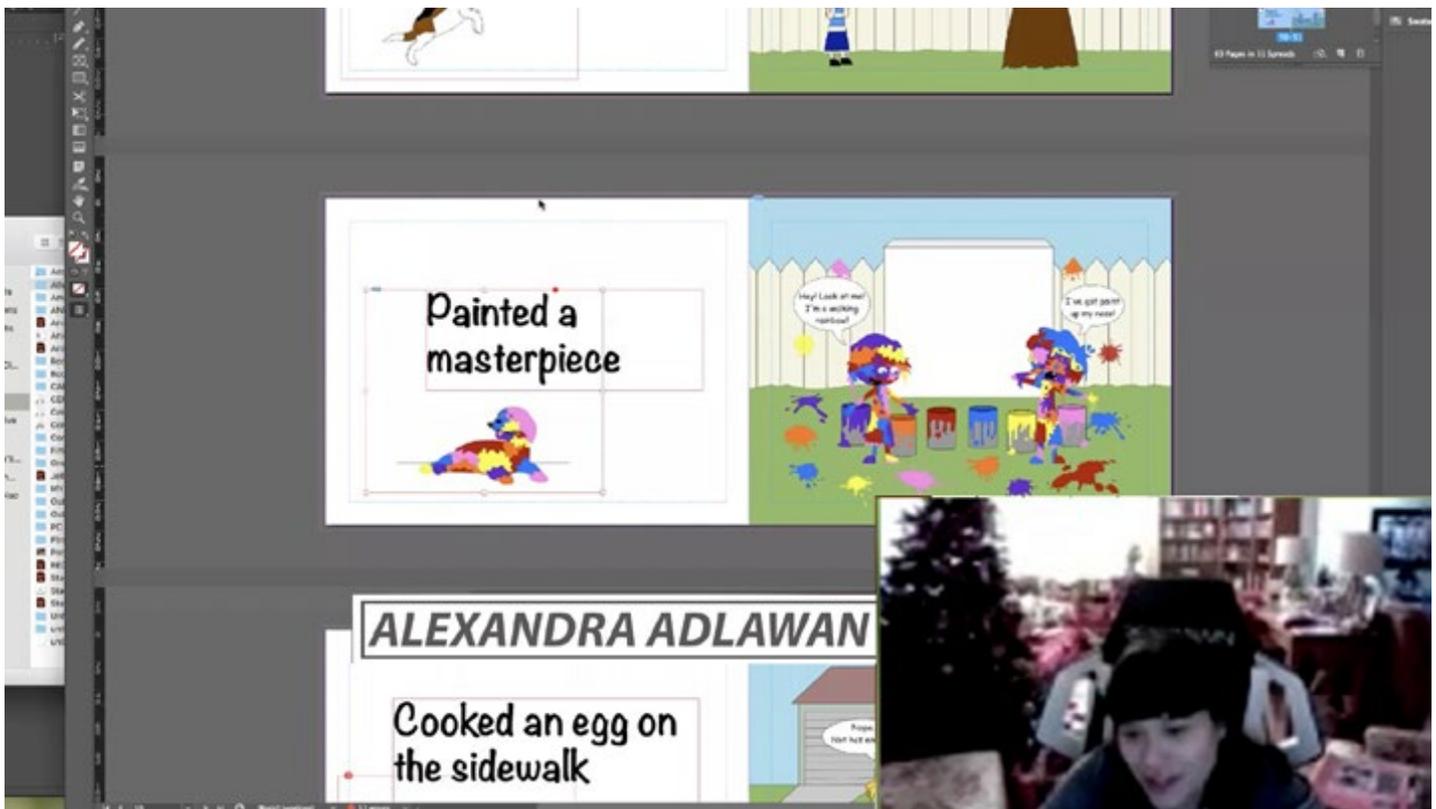
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THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN THE REAL THING
by Karen Doe

At Tink Tank Animate LLC, animation stands for animate your life. A Tink Tanker is an artist on the autism spectrum, a victim of a traumatic brain injury, and other forms of neurocognitive disorders. Tink Tank Animate has been recently founded in Detroit, Michigan by writer, director, animator, producer Tawd b. Dorenfeld who has had the unique experience of being a film, commercial, and music video creator, both independently and with major studios, then after that continuing 25 year creative career, Dorenfeld began working in the field of animation and autism at Los Angeles' Exceptional Minds, a trade school for studio employment in VFX & Digital Animation. Through the combination of Dorenfeld's spectrum of experience from producing, publishing, and completion, the backbone of Tink Tank Animate is focused, not on the level of skill or ability of an artist with a disability, but in their strength in the Arts of Storytelling, allowing all, from all walks of life, accomplish communication, value, physical, occupational, and cognitive therapy, through complete Storytelling.

Tink Tank Animate and its program, is less a place as much of a state-of-mind with one on one mentoring, instruction, producing, and idea defining. The program is, for intention, done virtually using the Zoom App in order to experience the computer screen with the same POV as the Artist/Client. Even in the office space of a Tink Tank location, the Mentor & Artist are in separate areas, allowing the Artist their own space, but with the direct eye contact, audible contact, and computer mouse access. Dorenfeld explains, "For our artists it eliminates a lot of sensory issues the artist may have both in person, or away from the comfort zone of their home, or their OT / PT's clinical office. In our awesome modern time, remote is the best and most productive location for therapy of this sort. We all want people to become or return to more independence. If they can do this virtually, and have a valuable, enriched, and gain productive knowledge to do on their own thing after therapy, then there is a better chance they will continue telling their stories with their choice of medium after they've completed their sessions with Tink Tank. With the Tink Tank Animate one-on-one virtual program/sessions, after Therapy you actually have something fun to do. Something fun, valuable, and now you know you can totally do it. It's better than art school, it's animating your life, and for some, re-animating their lives."



Each artist comes into Tink Tank either with a story to tell, or with the will to tell. Even without the will, the mentors will extract one from you through conversation and questions. Some start telling their tales through animation, then decide they'd rather do a book, or a radio-play, or finish a book, then do an animation. Justin Valenti, is precisely an artist who went from animation to a radio-play with an illustrated companion book to that radio-play. Alexandra Adlawan, now on her third completed children's book for her series *The Adventures of Maddie and Albert*, had begun her studies in the digital arts with animation at Exceptional Minds. It was when Alex was transferred from the full-time classroom to private lessons with Dorenfeld, due to anxiety and stress related issues, that Dorenfeld decided to combat Alex's anxiety from the sometimes-strenuous task of animating, by transitioning her toward her greatest artistic love, the printed book. They threw away the animation lessons and started writing scripts and developing characters in detail through the written word. Soon, upon Dorenfeld's relocation to Detroit, Alex desired to no longer ignore her illustrations and together Dorenfeld and Alexandra set on a path of her creating her own line of children's books as they continued the mentoring relationship completing three beautifully illustrated and wonderfully told books through a partnership between Tink Tank Animate and Exceptional Minds.

Peter McMahon was most known for drawing great, adorable, charming doodles, and immediately undoing each line. Now, through his time at Tink Tank Animate, Peter has been able to focus in completing multiple greeting cards, animated greeting cards, a couple simple short films, and now his own *Alphabet Book* with three focused illustrations per letter. Are there more tales to tell? How about asking, are there more stories that are being told, because this place is no joke when it says it's creating highly productive individuals with learning disabilities, traumas, and other challenges that Dorenfeld says to, "We are changing the narrative, one voice at a time."

Tyler Cunningham has just turned eighteen. He has never heard of the band that wears the giant eyeballs, but most recently the guitarist of the renowned Residents, has donated music to Tyler's first animated short film "PUSH," an animation you'd expect, maybe, from a SVA Graduate Student, but not as a first go after a few months of practice, and with an organic style, not generally conducive to artists on the autism spectrum. It is that "organic style," that is a good representation of the technique of mentoring, and production coming from Tink Tank Animate. With Dorenfeld's expansive career in Stop Motion Animation, and straight-ahead screenwriting, and novel writing, Dorenfeld takes a Straight-Ahead philosophy, attitude, about every step of the artistic process.



Benjamin Maixner, M.A. BCBA, Director of Programs for Exceptional Minds, describes Dorenfeld's interaction with the population as, "[Tink Tank's] approach in which they presume competence and look to problem-solve rather than place limitations is highly motivating." Even through the preparation of a project under Tink Tank's guidance you are going forward not back, unless you go back to "add," a little detail. This Dorenfeld says, "[Straight-Ahead decisions] gets the artist to the end; completes something. And with completion comes confidence, and with confidence comes desire, and from desire comes productivity, and from productivity comes better."

There are even some artists that excel in their coordination, their illustration ability, and yet struggle with balancing or containing an idea. Kyle Grossart, struggled in lower learning due to his autism diagnosis. None of this prevented Kyle's mind from creating characters and stories and ideas, but lacked the cognitive balance to organize these ideas into a straight narrative that he so desired. To overcome this hurdle would allow Kyle to the ability to live the full life of creating stories to come true. Kyle did not draw at Tink Tank Animate. Kyle spent each one of his sessions typing and developing ideas with the mentor, always knowing the mentor said, "You'll hire out to fix up your grammar. Everyone uses an editor,

you're good, keep writing." Kyle has, since his first session, now completed an entire Pitch Proposal with Log Lines, Synopses, Treatments, Episodes, and Character Bios, that should compete with any professional pitching to studios such as Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network.

Tink Tank Animates number one fan, Martin Olson (Phineas & Ferb, Rocko's Modern Life, Adventure Time) says, "The idea that an organization dedicated to Artists with Learning Disabilities and Autism that is completely focused on storytelling as the basis of all art and communication, is the greatest thing ever."

But it's the parents and guardians that have the most praise for the company. "When you find a therapy program that truly benefits your child with autism, it's like finding a pot of gold," Molly Schad, Mother of Harry Schad.

"Aden's confidence has begun to soar and to continue watching him believe in himself after completing his sessions with Tink Tank is wonderful," Barbie Gerkenmeyer, Mother of Aden Gerkenmeyer

"[Dorenfeld] is that dream teacher that every parent of a special needs child imagines." - Kathy Adlawan, Mother of Alexandra Adlawan



Most recently Tink Tank has re-integrated Stop Motion Animation into its program. Re-integrated, because Dorenfeld's first experience with autism and animation was his time mentoring and teaching a private Los Angeles high school student on the spectrum, Sydney Frank, in the art of Stop Motion Animation so she may go on, which she did, to Undergraduate Studies at Cal Arts, then onto an internship with the Jim Henson Company, a company that too had been supportive and kind to Dorenfeld in his first years in the industry right out of NYU. It was with Sydney, that Dorenfeld found he had a knack for working with this unique population, and that Stop Motion was in fact the way to go, especially the more impacted the artist is.

Now Tink Tanker Harry Schad, from Missouri, who has already done, with Tink Tank, an independent hand drawn commercial, a number of shorts, and dabbled in Stop Motion on his own, has spent an intensive two day Stop Motion session in person in Detroit. First thing his mother Molly Schad noticed was Harry's non-stop attitude. He worked for hours preparing all the cutout replacement animation pieces, the entire background, and dove right into the straight-ahead process of Down Shooter Stop Motion Animation with a glass plate and paper. The combination of cognitive and occupational/physical therapy was on high. From determining distance to move an item, holding a pencil or two using the eraser to gently slide the paper along the glass, to not bumping light stands, to picking up new cutouts

with tweezers, and using onion skins to determine your last and next move, the artist does a vast number more operations and exercises in 5 minutes time than a full one hour session of straight cognitive and occupational therapies. This stands for the digital world as well, yet the instant gratification of Stop Motion in comparison to hand drawn, or motion graphic animation is remarkably different.

Dorenfeld says, "Tink Tank Animate will always be expanding. We are based on the Artist's needs. Every Artist, beyond the knowledge of storytelling, are different and have different needs. We morph into those needs, we are as animated as your life will be."

If you know of an Artist, or person, of special needs please send them to www.TinkTankAnimate.com

