

VETERAN PIXAR FILMMAKER EARNS PRAISE FOR HER FIRST INDEPENDENT SHORT, *LITTLE t*

Masha Ellsworth has worked on 20 hits that have won nine Academy Awards for Best Animated Features and grossed over \$11.5 billion.

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Palm Springs, CA - March 22, 2024 – **Masha Ellsworth**, the lead technical director in the characters department at Pixar, is earning praise for her directorial debut, *“Little t,”* a feature that explores perfectionism and self-criticism.

Since its 2023 release, *“Little t”* has earned numerous accolades, including **Best Animation at the Utah International Film Festival**—one of its four awards, alongside an honorable mention. **It has been accepted into 27 festivals to date.**

“Little t” follows Alexis on the biggest day of her life: an interview for her dream job as an interior designer. Though she’s armed with an impressive resume and design portfolio, she’s also accompanied by two longtime companions: her “inner critic” and “inner child.” As Alexis examines her connections to comfort food, she uncovers new insights about herself and her abilities and finds the courage to showcase her potential in the interview, quelling the doubts raised by her longtime companions.

Ellsworth began working at Pixar in 2007 as an intern on the Oscar-winning film *“Ratatouille.”* She transitioned into characters for the Oscar-winning films, *“Up,” “Toy Story 3,” “Brave,” “Cars 2,” “Inside Out,”* and *“Incredibles 2.”*

In the 17 years Ellsworth has worked at Pixar, the films she worked on have won nine Oscars for Best Animated Films and grossed over \$11.5 billion worldwide.

“Up” and “Toy Story 3” were also earned Oscar nominations for best picture. “Beauty and the Beast” is the only other animated film to earn an Oscar nomination for best picture.

Despite her success, Ellsworth was looking for a new challenge and a chance to tell personal stories.

“Years ago, when I was stuck in a career rut, I grappled with self-doubt and a fear of failure,” Ellsworth said. “Then I got a fortune cookie from Panda Express that said, ‘Silence the critic within,’ and that prompted me to explore and overcome my inner critic.”

Pixar offers a co-op project, where employees are provided with start-up funding to create their own short animated films. This proved to be vital for Ellsworth to produce “Little t.”

Little t reassures viewers that dealing with such negative self-talk is normal and highlights the main character’s journey to silence hers.

Lisa Damour, a renowned American clinical psychologist and author, praised Little t for its complex and visually stunning narrative that directly addresses perfectionism and self-criticism. She highlighted how effectively the film depicts the transformation of imagination from an adversary to an ally, making it relatable to anyone who has ever felt not good enough. Damour suggests that the film’s universal message will resonate broadly.

Asian film critic **Thomas S. Hong** wrote that he couldn’t help “falling in love with this six-minute short film.” Little t makes us realize “that we have to face up to the little traumas of everyday life and love ourselves more.”

Utah International Film Festival featured an insightful article about “Little t,” diving into the creative process and inspiration behind Masha Ellsworth’s animated short.

Animation magazine singled out the film for being “notable” among the 81 animated shorts selected for the **25th Bucheon International Animation Festival**. **LA Indies** has also highlighted “Little t” in its coverage of the independent film industry.

ABOUT MASHA ELLSWORTH

Masha Ellsworth is a lead technical director in the characters department at **Pixar Animation Studios** by day and an indie filmmaker by night. Little t marks her directorial debut.

The Ukrainian-American filmmaker started her career in 2007 when she became an intern on Pixar’s Oscar Award-winning **Ratatouille**, working on sets and lighting. She then transitioned into characters for Pixar feature films such as **UP**, **Toy Story 3**, **Brave**, **Cars 2**, **Inside Out**, **Finding Dory**, **Cars 3**, **Good Dinosaur**, **Coco**, **Incredibles 2**, **Onward** and **Turning Red**. Born and raised in northern Ukraine, Ellsworth graduated from Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah with a double degree in Computer Science and Visual Art.

Little t is a product of Pixar’s co-op project, in which employees are provided with start-up funding to create their own short animated films. Most of the work, however, was done pro bono by professionals from the animation industry, drawing from companies like Pixar, Netflix Animation, Dreamworks Animation, Sony Animation and DNEG, along with artists from around the globe. Contributors came from a variety of backgrounds, drawn together by Little t’s compelling story.

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