

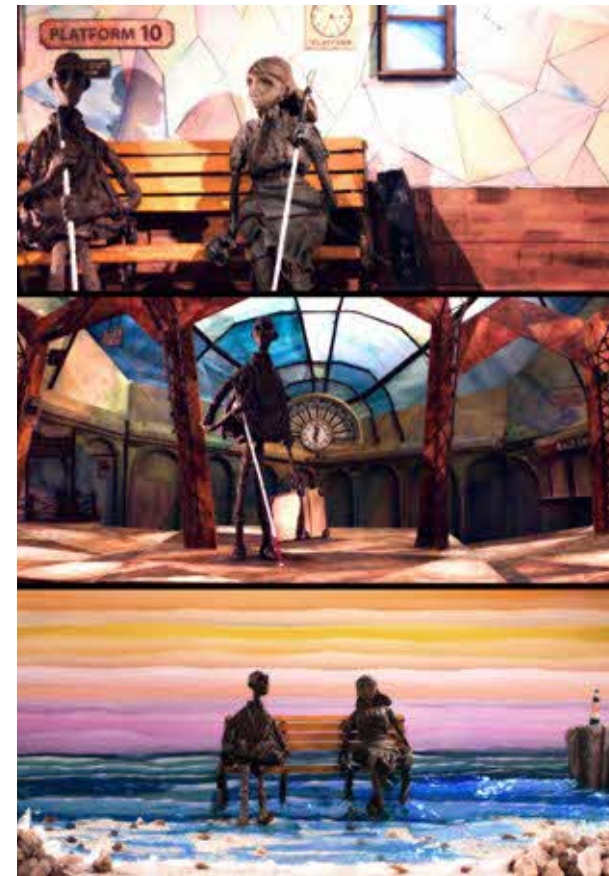
YOUNG ARTIST AWARD 2022

## JERROLD CHONG

JERROLD CHONG (b. 1991) is a writer, director and animation filmmaker. He is the co-founder of local independent animation studio, Finding Pictures, as well as the Programme Director for Cartoons Underground, South-east Asia's largest independent animation festival.

His animated works are often surreal, at times absurdist, tales that explore human connection, time and memory through the mediums of stop-motion and hand-drawn animation. His films tell human stories that blur the lines between the real and unreal, introducing worlds and characters that are unnerving, foreign and enigmatic, while investigating darker and more mature themes like xenophobia, consumerism and social inequality.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts)'s prestigious Character Animation programme where he honed his artistic voice. His first film 'Nascent' (2014) won the Best Animation Award at the 6th Singapore Short Film Awards, while his subsequent films 'Ways of Seeing' (2015) and 'Eclipse' (2016) both premiered at Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF) before travelling to numerous international film festivals. Upon his return home, he was commissioned by Singapore Writers Festival to adapt a local text to screen as part of its Utter programme in 2017, the result of which is 'What Has to Be'. An adaptation of S. Rajaratnam's short story of the same name, it is a black-and-white graphite animated film about two parents grieving the tragic death of their firstborn as they await the arrival of their second. It won Best Animation at National Youth Film Awards (NYFA) Open Category and the Craft Superstructure Award for the Best Film at CRAFT International Animation Festival.

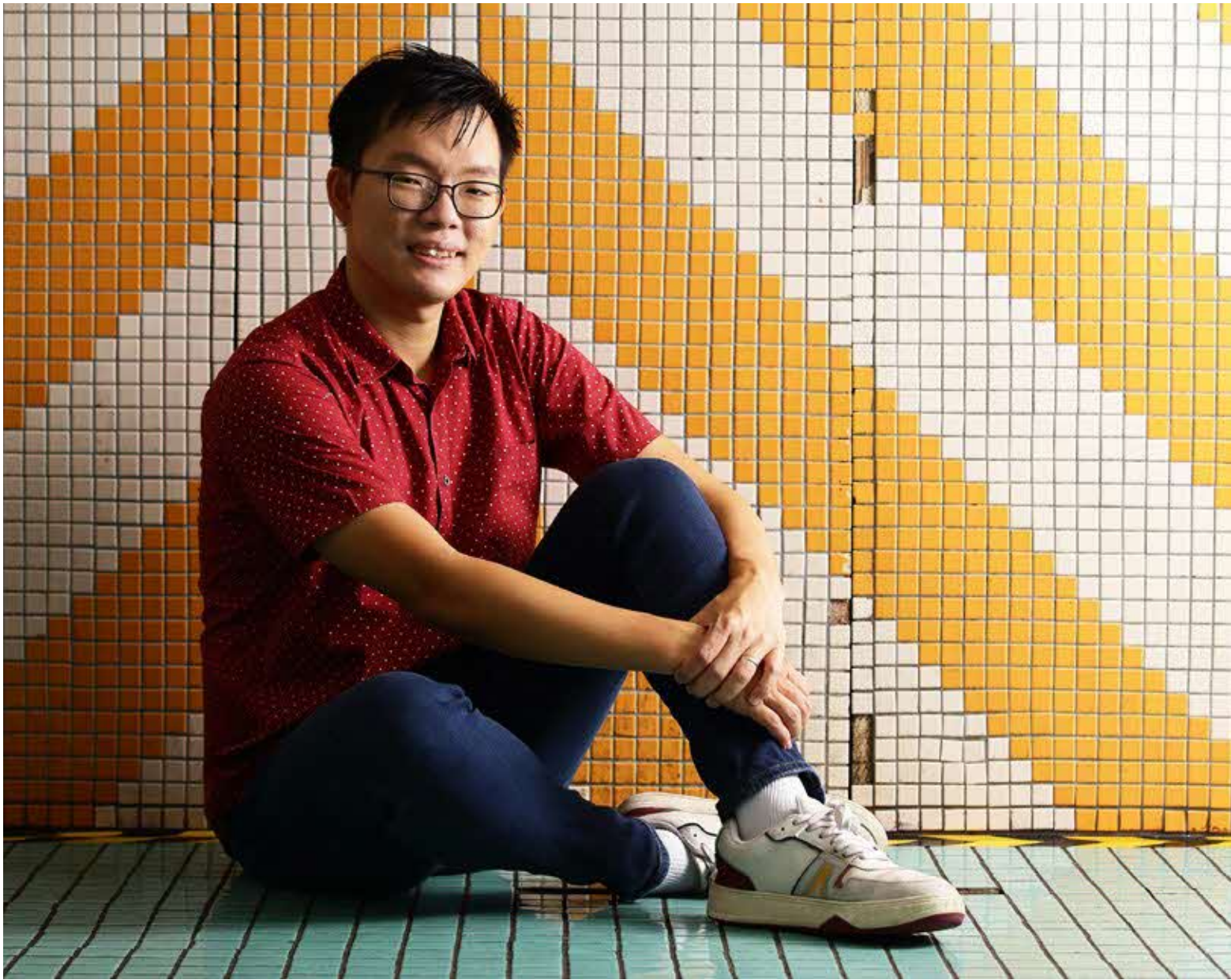


Stills from 'Ways of Seeing', 2015.  
Photo courtesy of Jerrold Chong

His stop-motion, cut-out animated film 'Piece of Meat' (2019) premiered at Cannes Directors' Fortnight, and screened at festivals such as Busan International Film Festival, Annecy International Animated Film Festival and SGIFF. He wrote and co-directed 'The Brown Dog' (2020), a commissioned film as part of the 15 Shorts initiative. In 2021, together with his team at Finding Pictures, he co-directed the National Day Theme Song music video 'The Road Ahead', which topped YouTube's Top 10 Music Video List that year and has garnered 4.3 million views on the platform thus far.

As a writer/director, he has participated in film labs including SGIFF Southeast Asian Film Lab in 2016, Annecy MIFA Animation Du Monde in 2019 and Docs by the Sea Storytelling Lab in 2022. Most recently, Jerrold was awarded at the Youth Inspiration Award at National Youth Film Awards, which recognised his contributions as an arts educator and a mentor in the animation film community.





## A CONVERSATION WITH JERROLD CHONG

**Tell us about your earliest memories encountering the arts. Who or what were your key influences in animation?**

When I was a student, my teachers introduced me to films such as Koji Yamamura's 'Mt. Head', Michaël Dudok de Wit's 'Father and Daughter', and Hayao Miyazaki's 'Spirited Away'. They all left a deep imprint on me.

I was born into a generation when Pixar's 'Toy Story' wowed the world. 'Toy Story' was also the first film my parents took us to see in the cinema. There was magic to the medium that captured my imagination. Thereafter, I became obsessed with the making-of videos of 'The Nightmare Before Christmas' and 'Corpse Bride'. It was fascinating to get a peek into the artistry that went into those films.



Behind the scenes of 'Eclipse', 2016.  
Photo courtesy of Jerrold Chong

Attending the Art Elective Programme (AEP) in secondary school opened my eyes not just to animation, but also to sculpture, painting, illustration, and even experimental video art.

Animation drew upon the combined skills and concepts from these artforms, and combines storytelling and filmmaking. Over the years, I have discovered independent, experimental animation by various filmmakers with the National Film Board of Canada (NFB); the Quay Brothers; and Czech filmmaker and animator Jan Švankmajer.

**What were some of the biggest challenges you faced when creating new works?**

With each new work, I'm discovering something new about myself as an artist and a filmmaker and what are the important stories I want to tell. Animation is a long, painstaking process and it can be difficult to maintain the passion. Then again, there's a unique beauty we animators have with time. It gives you the space to reflect and have surprising moments of creative discovery.

**What motivated you to continue in spite of these challenges?**

There's an unforgettable feeling when I'm watching my film for the first time in a cinema, with an audience and finding out their reactions! Working with artists, animators, set designers, sound designers, musicians, is very exciting, as they offer so many new perspectives. I cherish the creative connection.

**Please share what a typical day in your life as an animation artist is like.**

A lot of work starts from initial sketches and communicating ideas to potential collaborators. I also spend time writing scripts and working on pitches and treatments. When it comes to the production stage, time is dedicated to animating. Animation is an aspect I really enjoy as it's very meditative. Whether I'm doing 2D hand-drawn animation or moving puppets frame by frame, I feel immersed within the world of my characters.

**What do you want the audience to experience through your works?**

I hope the audience feels a genuine emotional connection with the characters, to be in their shoes and to experience the world they inhabit. I like to include visual motifs, and I hope the audience will want to watch the film again, pick up on these clues and find a space to think and form their own interpretations.





Behind the scenes of 'Ways of Seeing', 2015.  
Photo courtesy of Jerrold Chong

**What advice would you give the younger generation who would like to pursue a career in your field?**

Be bold, be fearless of making mistakes, and have confidence in your inner voice.

Keep learning and be open to trying new things.

Find and build a community of like-minded people around you. Don't be afraid to work with people who are better than you!

**What are your hopes and vision for Singapore's animation scene?**

I wish for the local animation scene to become more diverse. There are many unique and talented storytellers out there, and the more opportunities for their voices to be heard, the better!

I also hope for space for independent and experimental animation to be nurtured and funded alongside the more commercial side of the animation industry. In the US and Europe, there is a beautiful trend of independent artists and directors working together with larger commercial studios such as Netflix, Sun Creatures, and Tonko House. That has resulted in fresh, innovative visual styles and storytelling approaches coming into features and series work that receive critical acclaim while getting seen by audiences.

My bigger dream would be to direct a homegrown animated feature film and/or series that can travel and succeed around the world.

**How does receiving the Young Artist Award change things for you? Tell us more about how you would like to further grow and contribute to the arts scene.**

I am humbled by this award. It serves as motivation to continue on this journey. Animation is a difficult process, and there are often moments of vulnerability and self-doubt. The award definitely helps gain more confidence in myself as an artist and my work.

It is my first year as the Programme Director for Cartoons Underground so I hope to use the platform to continue championing local independent animation and support emerging filmmakers.

Lastly, I hope that the award also opens up new opportunities for working with artists from different artforms, as I enjoy collaboration across disciplines and find joy in meeting new people and gaining new perspectives.



## WORDS OF APPRECIATION

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