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Domee Shi inspires the next generation of animators

Sheridan students meet a Sheridan hero: Domee Shi inspires the next generation of animators

🕒 2022-03-11 👤 Evan Loree 📁 News 💬 0

Domee Shi inspires the next generation of animators



Canada totals twenty-five medals at Beijing

🕒 2022-03-23 💬 0

Canada has returned from Beijing after winning 25 medals in the 2022 Winter Paralympics. They ranked third in total medals among all countries. This is [...]



CJF, JSC, and MJP launch \$200,000

bursary for journalists

🕒 2022-03-16 💬 0

On March 9, the Canadian Journalism Foundation, J-Schools Canada-Écoles-J Canada, and the Meta Journalism Project announced a \$200,000 bursary program. Up to 100 bursaries for [...]

Sheridan animation students are more excited than ever for the release of Disney Pixar's latest film, Turning Red, after director and Sheridan alumna, Domee Shi, provided students with a sneak peek of the film Wednesday at the Oakville Centre for The Performing Arts.

The film will be released, Friday, on Disney Plus and it marks a historic first for both Pixar and Shi, as it is the first Pixar film to be directed by a woman and the first Pixar film to feature a girl of Chinese descent as its main character. Turning Red is also Shi's first feature film, though not her first directorial credit.



A Discussion with the National Eating Disorder Information Centre

🕒 2022-03-15 💬 0

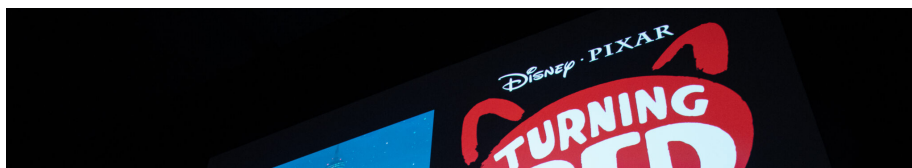
Sheridan is having a free online event on March 16th at 6 pm for a discussion with the National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC). All [...]



Official promotional poster for Disney Pixar's Turning Red

Turning Red tells the story of Meilin Lee, a prepubescent teenage girl of Chinese heritage who wakes one morning in the fur of a giant red panda. The story is a menstrual allegory, indicated by the panda's red fur. It is also a story about motherhood. Meilin's relationship with her mother, Ming, is loving, but the well-meaning mom is sometimes overbearing, and Meilin is beginning to become her own person.

"Don't be afraid to kill your babies," said Shi. "In order to tell great stories, you have to be vulnerable." The theme of motherhood is close to home for Shi. The relationship between Meilin and Ming is similar to Shi's relationship with her own mother. It is not the first time she has explored this theme in her art.





In 2018 she was the **first woman to direct a Pixar short** with the release of Bao. The eight-minute film tells the story of a mother who magically brings a dumpling to life, only to watch him outgrow his mother as he gets older. **Shi received an Oscar** for her work on Bao.

Shi has been with Pixar since graduating from Sheridan College in 2011. In her time with the company she has worked as a storyboarder and staff artist on Toy Story 4, The Incredibles 2, and Inside Out, to name a few.

Turning Red is not just unique for its representation of women and people of colour, it is also unique for its setting: Toronto. **In an interview with Toronto Life**, film critic, Geoff Pevere says that Toronto is frequently used as a film set but rarely used as a film setting.

“People in Toronto; they’re used to seeing Toronto in Drag as another place,” said Pevere.

“Every chance I get I just tried to squeeze as much Toronto references in there as possible,” said Shi. The film features references to the TTC, CN Tower, and the world-famous Kensington Market. Toronto audiences will get a chance to see it for themselves when the film comes out this Friday.

Turning Red is a love letter to Canadian teenage girls. From the colour palette to the teen pop soundtrack, Turning Red is a story for girls, by girls. The Pixar catalogue is dominated by male stories, just as the wider animation industry is dominated by male storytellers. Pixar has been trying to rehabilitate this image by giving greater representation to female and minority voices.

Inside Out is notable for featuring female leads with Joy, Sadness, and Riley, while Soul has attempted to better represent people of colour with its lead character, Jazz pianist and music teacher, Joe Gardner. Turning Red continues this trend.

Shi has **been described as a trailblazer** for her work in animation, being not just the first female, but also Asian director at Pixar. However, being the first of anything comes with a lot of pressure.

“One thing that I made sure I was doing and I think for my own sake to alleviate some of that pressure was by having more Asian people on the payroll,” said Shi. Rona Liu, their production designer was instrumental in ensuring that the characters on screen were both accurate and sensitive representations of their cultures.

Sheridan is known internationally for its animation program, but even for them, the industry is competitive, and some of the students in the crowd were already feeling the pressure.

“The last two years [at Sheridan] was so formative and like being at a studio with your classmates in person was like everything to me,” said Shi. “Keep in contact with your classmates, and really try to build that somehow.”

Shi’s work at Pixar is laying the ground for generations of animation students to come. Students and faculty alike have been thrilled to celebrate her success this week with the release of Turning Red.

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