

March 2026

SPARK

— ANIM —

Stories. Vision. Industry.

African Queens In Animation

Crafting new narratives

Feature

African women:
the builders of
the animation industry

In Conversation With
Damilola Solesi

Inside The Job
Louissette Ratsivahiny,
Animation producer

Project Spotlight
Maghariba fi Samaa

www.lestudioka.com

EDITORIAL

When I founded Studio KÄ seven years ago, I had no idea what a human and professional adventure it would turn out to be. Over the years, working in this sector, which is as economically complex as it is exciting, I have taken on many roles: screenwriter, reader, director, producer, mentor, lecturer, vice president of an association, academy member, jury member, editor... and so on.

I had to adapt and grow quickly. Enter rooms where I wasn't expected. What I was defending wasn't just projects, but my legitimacy as an African woman in animation.

I had to choose to evolve despite everything, seeking a balance between available resources, production capacity, and market challenges. I had to keep doing the educational work of valuing African audiences, of building credibility in a world where networks are so often the key.

Nevertheless, these years of immersion in the world of animation fill me with optimism because I see the number of African women growing at all levels of animation: those who are already working in the field and those who are still learning.

Today, we are no longer trying to enter the industry, we are building it.



Adja Mariam Soro

Editor-in-Chief

We pitch our projects at the biggest international events. We are taking the lead by creating associations, festivals, professional magazines, and schools. We are filling in the gaps.

This issue of Spark is dedicated to the women of the continent who are driving the African animation industry forward. Remember their names, because they are the torchbearers of a new wave of animation on the global stage.

MASTHEAD

SPARK – Issue 2

March 2026

Publisher

Studio KÄ, Côte d'Ivoire
Cocody, Abidjan – L119 Street, Espoir Building

Publisher & Managing Director

Adja Mariam Soro

Editor-in-Chief

Adja Mariam Soro

Content and Editorial Lead

Exaucée Myckamona

Contributors

- Damilola Solesi
- Ghita Amrati
- Louissette Ratsivahiny
- Mounia Aram
- Esther Kemi Gbadamossi
- Jihane Joypaul
- Raïssa Ioussouf
- Nosipho Van den Bragt
- Marguerite Aboutet
- Ani Eliam
- Firdaousse Arrami
- Sarah Mallia
- Aïcha Zida
- Medalys Jesmar
- Tracey-Lee Rainers
- Kumbi Chitenderu
- Ukpeme Uwakwe
- Omoyefe Majoroh
- Tshepo Moche
- Vanessa Sinden
- Ingrid De Beer
- Ng'endo Mukii
- Quenum Miryam
- Ajoke Anosike

Art Direction & Layout

- John Meledje
- Pique
- Théo Martins

Digital Edition

Online publication only – not printed

Contact

Studio KÄ SAS
spark@lestudioka.com

Social Media

Instagram: @SparkAnim
LinkedIn: @SparkAnim

© 2026 – Studio KÄ Côte d'Ivoire

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the publisher.



SUMMARY

Feature ————— 05

African women: the builders of the animation industry

In Conversation With ————— 20

Damilola Solesì

Project Spotlight ————— 25

Maghariba fi Samaa

Inside The Job ————— 30

Louissette Ratsivahiny, Animation producer

On The Ground ————— 33

Afro Women in Animation

Industry Watch ————— 35

March Events ————— 36

The Notes ————— 38

Layout Hell

HERE, POWERFUL AND IMPACTFUL



FEATURE

AFRICAN WOMEN: THE BUILDERS OF THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY

In this developing industry, one movement is now undeniable: African women are taking the lead, building, running, and transforming the sector.

Across the continent, women now hold key positions in the ecosystem: directors, producers, artistic directors, screenwriters, animators, entrepreneurs, trainers, and pipeline managers. They challenge assumptions, launch studios, take on international projects, and invent business models that fit their own local realities.

Some women are already trailblazers.

In Ivory Coast, Marguerite Aboutet has established herself as one of the leading figures in African youth creative content with international reach. Her comic book series *Aya de Yopougon*, with over 800,000 copies sold and translations into multiple languages, was adapted into a feature-length animated film and distributed worldwide. More recently, the animated series *Akissi* confirms the ability of African intellectual properties to endure over time and to circulate across global markets.

In Nigeria, Omotola Jaiyeola, known as Omoberry, has built one of Africa's most internationally recognized youth franchises with *Bino & Fino*. The series has accumulated several million views online and has been adapted into books, apps, and educational products, demonstrating the commercial potential of African content for children in local and diaspora markets.

On a pan-African scale, creators such as Tendayi Nyeke, who contributed to *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire*, are helping to put African animation on the global map. Produced by Triggerfish for Disney+, the series earned recognition at the Annie Awards, one of animation's most prestigious honors.



Many other women strengthen the industry with their technical expertise, sometimes far from the spotlight, but at the heart of international pipelines. African animators are now working on major productions abroad, contributing to the export of the continent's know-how and the construction of a global ecosystem.

These career paths reveal a structural dynamic.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the cultural and creative industries represent around 15.1 million jobs, 47% of which are held by women. Women are therefore already a central economic force in the CCI. But the major challenge now remains leadership: access to funding, studio governance, ownership of intellectual property, and the ability to produce and distribute at scale.

The challenges are well known. Globally, women represent around 30% of the animation workforce, but less than 15% of animated feature film directors. In Africa, the gap is wider due to limited infrastructure, scarce dedicated funds, a lack of mentorship, and opportunities concentrated outside the continent.

It is precisely to strengthen this female pipeline that structural initiatives are emerging.

UNESCO, in partnership with the Triggerfish Foundation, has launched the "Creator Labs" program, bringing together 40 women in animation of African origin: 20 directors and 20 visual development artists, in an intensive program combining mentoring, masterclasses, and international networking.

The collective dynamic is also gaining momentum. The African Women in Animation network already has more than 2,400 members, while the first Afro Women in Animation Festival in Lagos brought together more than 350 participants in 2025. The African female ecosystem is organizing, connecting, and becoming more professional.



En route - Studio KÄ



Aïcha Zida

BURKINA FASO

ANIMATOR

SPECIALITY
2D ANIMATION



Aïcha Zida works in the animation industry as a 2D Animator and collaborates as a freelancer with the studio Pit Production. She developed her skills through training programs and hands-on personal practice, and now she contributes to the different stages of the 2D animation pipeline.

- ✦ MALAIKA, a Burkinabè animated series, selected at FESPACO 2025 and received a Special Mention for Animation at Vues d’Afrique International Film Festival in Québec in 2025.
- ✦ She is currently working on a 4–6 minute mini-series on road safety awareness, and is also developing her first live-action short film, “LA PORTE”. The project is being incubated by Ouaga Tout Court in Burkina Faso.



Medalys Jesmar

MADAGASCAR

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT,
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR

SPECIALITY
ANIMATION
PRODUCTION
SUPPORT



Anjaraaso Medalys Jesmar works as a community manager for various companies while contributing to film productions as a production assistant and script supervisor. She is engaged on a project basis, primarily contributing during pre-production and production phases.

- ✦ “Silence”, Her first animated short film, enabled her to represent Madagascar at FESPACO in 2025.
- ✦ “Silence” was also selected in several countries including France, Nigeria, Cameroon, Guinea, and Cape Verde.



Jihane Joypaul

MOROCCO

ANIMATED
FILM DIRECTOR

SPECIALITY
STOP-MOTION
ANIMATION



As an animated film director of Lebanese-Moroccan and Mauritian-Indian descent, Jihane Joypaul developed an interest in the medium as a teenager, during which time she made her first amateur short films. Today, she is part of the Moroccan delegation representing national talent at international events dedicated to animation, such as the Annecy Festival and the Venice Film Festival.

- ✦ National selection of “La Maison des Anges”, her feature in development, for co-production workshops in Cannes 2025.
- ✦ Named “Woman Behind The Scene” by FabUK Magazine for her work in production and supporting international colleagues in facilitating their projects in Morocco.
- ✦ Selected for the Low Budget Program for Dr. Heck at Marrakech Short Film Festival (2023).





Tracey-Lee Rainers

SOUTH AFRICA



STORY PRACTITIONER,
CO-FOUNDER OF
STORY OASIS

SPECIALITY
STORY DEVELOPMENT

Tracey-Lee Rainers is an entrepreneur and story developer. She started her career as a documentary producer before transitioning into writing for fiction, focusing on story development. Today, her work spans both live action and animation.

- ✦ Co-founder of Story Oasis, a development hub based in South Africa, which won the Content London International Drama Series Pitch Competition in 2024.
- ✦ Co-founder and active member of the Writers Guild of South Africa.
- ✦ Creative executive on animated webisode Rosy Days, popular YouTube Series (2025).
- ✦ Honoured with an entrepreneur award at the Leading Women of Africa Awards (2024).



Ukpeme Uwakwe

NIGERIA



DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT,
BASEMENT ANIMATION
COMPANY

SPECIALITY
STORY DEVELOPMENT

Ukpeme Uwakwe is the Director of Development at Basement Animation Company, also working as a story developer, writer, and voice actor. With over 20 years of writing experience spanning poetry, short stories, and content writing, she brings a broad narrative expertise to animation.

- ✦ Scriptwriter for Emeka's Money and Halima's Vote, original book stories by Onyinye Ough adapted into animation.
- ✦ TV special pitch Joko & Dide won the MIFA Campus Talents Nigeria at the 2021 Annecy Animation Film Festival.
- ✦ Halima's Vote also won the Best Animation and Best Film on Accountability and Good Governance at the 2021 Africa Film for Impact Festival & Award, and the Best International Film at the Toronto Animation Arts Festival International (TAAFI) in 2022.



Marguerite ABOUTET

Côte d'Ivoire



WRITER,
COMIC BOOK AUTHOR,
SCREENWRITER

SPECIALITY
**COMIC BOOK ADAPTATIONS
FOR ANIMATION**

▪ PROFILE

Marguerite Aboutet is an Ivorian writer and comic book author. After a career in law, she decided to dedicate herself fully to writing, creating the character Aya, through which she humorously depicts an Africa far from clichés of war and famine.

The eight volumes of Aya de Yopougon, illustrated by Clément Oubrerie, were published by Gallimard between 2005 and 2023 and translated into 18 languages. The series follows the daily lives of a group of teenagers in the Yopougon district of Abidjan in the late 1970s.

She later turned to film adaptation: the animated feature Aya de Yopougon, co-directed with Clément Oubrerie, which achieved international recognition.

▪ Achievements & recognition

- ✔ Aya de Yopougon Volume 1 – Best First Album Award, Angoulême 2006.
- ✔ Animated feature film Aya, which premiered in the “First Work of Fiction” competition at the FIFF in 2013, was selected at the 2013 Annecy International Animation Film Festival, Festival International de Films de Fribourg, Festival du Film de Cabourg and nominated for the César Award for Best Animated Film, 2014.
- ✔ Akissi animated special (26 min) – broadcast on France 4, June 15, 2022.
- ✔ Founder of the association Des livres pour tous, aiming to establish neighborhood libraries, make books more accessible in African cities, and fight illiteracy. Five libraries are now open in Abidjan, serving over 6,000 children.

STRUCTURE & IMPACT

STATUS :
Founder

STUDIO NAMES :
MAP-A (Marguerite Aboutet Production Afrique),
based in Côte d'Ivoire
MAP (Marguerite Aboutet Production), based in Paris

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES :
2

TYPES OF PRODUCTIONS :

Post-production of films, videos, and TV;
Programs Consulting;
Project conception and management;
Production, directing, event promotion,
distribution, and exploitation of audiovisual
and cinematic projects;
Motion design (graphics, animated content,
audiovisual, and interactive media).



Mounia Aram

MOROCCO



AUTHOR, SPEAKER,
AND INTERNATIONAL
MENTOR

SPECIALITY
ANIMATION BUSINESS

Mounia Aram is an international Franco-Moroccan author, speaker, and mentor. Born in Casablanca and raised in France, she began her career in improvisational theatre before moving into fashion, and later into distribution and animation consulting.

She is now specialised in the business of animation, supporting studios, creative talents, institutions and international organisations on issues related to distribution, marketing, co-production, and strategic project positioning, with a particular focus on African and international ecosystems.

- ✔ Presentations, training sessions, and conferences in more than 15 countries (Africa, Europe, America, Middle East).
- ✔ Collaborations with studios, festivals, and international organizations on animation projects and the structuring of creative ecosystems.
- ✔ Winner of the Black in Animation Award.



Ingrid de Beer

SOUTH AFRICA



HEAD OF PRODUCTION,
LUCAN ANIMATION

SPECIALITY
ANIMATION PRODUCTION

Ingrid de Beer is the head of production of Lucan Animation. For over a decade, she has built a strong reputation in the animation industry, steadily expanding her expertise across production disciplines. She began her career as an offline editor before quickly progressing to post-production manager and then producer. In 2014, she shifted her focus to commercial animation, collaborating with acclaimed artists and directors on campaigns for some of the world's most recognisable brands.

- ✔ Development of Crocodile Dance, the feature film by Shofela Coker, selected to pitch at prestigious festivals including Annecy and Durban FilmMart.
- ✔ Played a key role in delivering Moremi, an episode of Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire. Multiple nominations at the Annie Awards and Emmy Awards.



NG'ENDO MUKII

KENYA



WRITER,
DIRECTOR AND PROFESSOR
OF THE PRACTICE

SPECIALITY

TRADITIONAL AND
COMPUTER-BASED
2D ANIMATION

■ PROFILE

Ng'endo Mukii is an Annie Award and Silver Hugo Award winning film director, best known for Disney+ animated anthology Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire.

Her work blends CGI, 2D, stop-motion, and documentary animation to explore African-futurism, indigenous knowledge systems, and the re-humanisation of African imagery. She has presented at the Design Indaba, notably through her talk Film Taxidermy and Re-Animation, which examined animation as a tool for challenging stereotyped representations of indigenous people.

■ Achievements & recognition

- ✦ Enkai, Disney+ anthology Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire; mixed-media animation combining CGI, 2D, and stop-motion (2023); won the Annie Award for Best Limited Series.
- ✦ Yellow Fever, short animation documentary (2012), screened internationally, including MUICA (Bogota), Olympia International Film Festival (Greece), SOAS Festival of Ideas (London), and Harvard GSD (USA).
- ✦ Kesho Pia Ni Siku (Tomorrow Is Another Day), short film, 2021; combines animation, archival photography, and live-action to tell her mother's journey.
- ✦ Nairobi Berries, 360° VR film, (2017), Big World Cinema, won Immersive Encounters Award, UK.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

STATUS :
Independent

CURRENTS ACTIVITIES :

-Full time Professor teaching traditional and computer-based 2D animation at School of The Museum of Fine Arts at TUFTS University.

-Animation director for Blink Ink



Tshepo Moche

SOUTH AFRICA



WRITER,
PARTNER AT PLAY NICE PICTURES,
DIRECTOR AT W.A.T.A

SPECIALITY
STORY DEVELOPMENT

Tshepo Moche is a South African writer, director, development consultant, and activist. She is a partner at Play Nice Pictures, a cross-cultural development studio focused on story and content development. Across her career, she has maintained a strong focus on story development, youth education, African narratives, and socially engaged, gender-conscious storytelling.

- ✔ Staff Writer on Netflix's first original animation series "Supa Team 4", featuring an all-African female writer's room and Executive Creative Consultant on "Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes" Series.
- ✔ Showrunner on "Azania Rises" animated series and Development Executive at Triggerfish Animation Studios.
- ✔ Director of W.A.T.A (Womxn Activating Transformation Africa), an NGO advocating for and supporting African female-identifying creatives in the animation and gaming industries.
- ✔ Director of the episode "First Totem Problems" from Disney's multi-award-winning Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire.



Sarah Mallia

KENYA



CREATIVE PRODUCER,
CO-FOUNDER OF
PUNGULU PA PRODUCTIONS

SPECIALITY
CHILDREN'S CONTENT

Sarah Mallia is a Kenyan creative producer based in Nairobi. She co-founded Pungulu Pa Productions and Freehand Movement Ltd to create children's content grounded in African cultural and natural heritage.

- ✔ Uli & Tata's African Nursery Rhymes : A 2D animated children's series archiving and reimagining traditional songs from across East Africa, available on YouTube and broadcast on Akili Kids TV in Kenya.
- ✔ Boy Boi (In Development) : An animated series exploring contemporary African childhood through humor, imagination, and everyday life experience.
- ✔ Guyo and the Star (In Development) : A father-son feature animated film based on the vast Chalbi Desert of Northern Kenya, exploring cultural heritage, fantasy and family.



Esther Kemi Gbadamosi

Nigeria



FILMMAKER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR,
FOUNDER OF RADIOXITY MEDIA
ANIMATION STUDIOS

SPECIALITY

STOP MOTION
ANIMATION

■ PROFILE

Esther Kemi Gbadamosi is a Nigerian filmmaker and a Creative Director at Radioxity Media Animation Studios. A lifelong lover of the arts and technology, she engaged in various craft practices and even worked as an auto mechanic while searching for her path. Filmmaking ultimately gave her the opportunity to explore all these capacities.

She discovered stop motion early in her career and has since used it as a medium to fully express her storytelling and imaginative capacities.

She wants to inspire young people to push boundaries in this field, as stop motion remains rarely explored by African creatives, particularly at a time when the vast majority of animators are turning to artificial intelligence to make production processes easier.

■ Achievements & recognition

- ✦ Created Africa's first studio-grade ball and socket armatures, a major advancement for high-quality stop motion in Africa.
- ✦ Nominated for the Academy Gold Fellowship for Women 2024.
- ✦ Fellow at the Berlin International Film Festival and selected for MIPTV Producers to Watch 2023.
- ✦ Prepare to die, short film project, Winner of MIFA Annecy 2022.
- ✦ Tomati, stop motion film, won Best Animation at Inshort Film Festival 2021.
- ✦ Won multiple awards at LIFANIMA 2022 & 2024, Independent Short Awards 2019 and Lake International Pan African Film Festival 2019.

STRUCTURE & IMPACT

TEAM & TALENT DEVELOPMENT:

Radioxity Media Animation Studios is committed to building a high-quality stop-motion animation ecosystem by bridging global expertise with local creative talent.

By developing locally made armatures that are attracting growing international attention, Radioxity Media is helping pave the way for the long-term growth of stop-motion animation across Africa.

STUDIO NAME :

Radioxity Media

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES :

12

TYPE OF PRODUCTIONS :

Stop Motion Infrastructure
Short Films
Series



Kumbi Chitenderu

ZIMBABWE



WRITER, STORY DEVELOPER,
AND CREATIVE CONSULTANT

SPECIALITY

STORY DEVELOPMENT

Kumbi Chitenderu is a Zimbabwean writer based in South Africa, specializing in story development across film, television, and animation. She sees herself first and foremost as a storyteller, which allows her to move fluidly between formats while keeping story at the centre of her work because she believes that's the essence of being human.

- ✔ Creative coordinator on Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire, a pan-African anthology produced by Walt Disney Animation, Triggerfish, and partner studios across the continent.
- ✔ Working on multiple animation projects, including a feature film and an animated series, while steadily developing her own original work.
- ✔ Mentorship and support for women in the animation industry through W.A.T.A.



Omoyefe Majoroh

NIGERIA



CREATIVE PRODUCER/DIRECTOR,
BLAC ONYX STUDIOS

SPECIALITY

3D ANIMATION

Omoyefe Majoroh is a storyteller, creative producer, and director with a decade of experience in 3D animation. Her animated shorts have achieved international recognition, screening at festivals worldwide.

- ✔ A Gule Day, 3D animated short, 2020, Best Animation - Kwara Film Festival 2022.
- ✔ In 2021, she was among twelve artists commissioned by the British Council to create a 3D animated short film, The Exchange, inspired by the New Narratives report.
- ✔ Ìràpadà (Redemption) – 3D animated short, 2024, Best Animation at 2024 Silicon Valley African Film Festival (SVAFF) and Best 3D Animation at 2024 LIFANIMA.



NOSIPHO VAN DEN BRAGT

South Africa



SPECIALITY

VFX

CEO & FOUNDER,
CHOCOLATE TRIBE &
FESTIVAL DIRECTOR OF
AVIJOZI

PROFILE

Nosipho Maketo-van den Bragt is a South African CEO, creative business entrepreneur, admitted attorney, writer, and mentor. She is the founder and owner of Chocolate Tribe, a high-end Animation, Visual Effects (VFX), & Content Development studio based in Johannesburg and Cape Town. With a passion for storytelling and a strong commitment to advocating for creatives, Nosipho fosters the growth of African narratives/ stories, rapid learning, innovation, and adaptability. Under her leadership, Chocolate Tribe has grown into one of Africa’s leading studios, producing award-winning international films, episodics, and commercials.

Achievements & recognition

- ✦ Africa and Asia’s #1 Animation & VFX studio at the Loerie Awards in 2023 and 2024, also earning the titles of Africa’s #1 VFX studio in 2023 and Africa’s #2 VFX studio in 2024, while being recognized as Netflix’s top VFX supplier in Africa.
- ✦ Collaborated with Paramount, Disney, Amazon Prime, Lionsgate, Toyota, KFC and many others.
- ✦ Worked on Cognition, a science-fiction short film holding the Guinness World Record for the most awards won by a short film.
- ✦ EY Entrepreneurial Winning Women (EMEIA) – Class of 2024
- ✦ FMX Advisory Board Member – 2025
- ✦ Deputy Chair of the Pixel Creators Board
- ✦ Jury Creation Africa 2025 - 2026 member

STRUCTURE & IMPACT

STUDIO NAME :

Chocolate Tribe

FOCUS AREAS :

Animation, VFX & Content Development

TYPES OF PRODUCTIONS :

Feature films
Episodic series
Commercials
Interactive and branded content

TEAM & TALENT DEVELOPMENT:

Chocolate Tribe employs 35+ full-time staff and hosts over 150 interns annually, playing a critical role in skills development and talent pipeline growth within the African Animation, VFX & Content Development landscape.



Firdaousse Arrami

MOROCCO

ANIMATION ARTIST
AND FILM DIRECTOR

SPECIALITY
SCENOGRAPHY



Firdaousse Arrami developed a transversal practice combining animation cinema, comic art, illustration, and performing arts. Her narratives center on questions of identity, body, femininity, and collective memory.

- ✔ Speaker – Animation Cinema: “Raconter le Maroc”, National Film Festival – Tanger, 2025.
- ✔ Participant in a collective project with the Fondation Hiba, Les Youyous de la mort, intended for a future animated short film adaptation.
- ✔ Currently developing her first animated short film, Achoura, produced by Objectif 9 (Canada) in co-production with Salt for Sugar Films (France) and 13ka (Prague).



Raïssa Ioussouf

MADAGASCAR

WRITER, DIRECTOR,
AND SCREENWRITER

SPECIALITY
STORYTELLING



Raïssa Ioussouf has developed her skills through workshops, residencies, extensive reading, online resources, and hands-on experience. A former journalist with a long-standing passion for storytelling, she works across both live-action and animation.

- ✔ Member of the writing team for season 3 of “Junior, des idées en or”, an animated series promoting solidarity and fraternity.
- ✔ Co-director with Volana Razafimanantsoa on the animated feature “Alakaosy, le monde maudit”, a story inspired by Madagascar's folktales, in development.



Ani Eliam

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

ANIMATION FILM
PRODUCER /
SCREENWRITER,
FOUNDER OF BOOYA
STUDIOS

SPECIALITY
2D ANIMATION



Ani Eliam focuses on developing and producing animated short films and feature projects that highlight culturally rooted storytelling while engaging contemporary audiences. Through her work, she contributes to the growing animation ecosystem in Côte d'Ivoire.

- ✔ Moyo – Animated short film, Selected at the São Paulo International Short Film Festival 2025 and Création Africa Forum 2025, Winner of the Best Short Film Award at Boost Anim 2024.
- ✔ Exhibitor at Gwangju Ace Fair 2024.
- ✔ Le cœur du Djembé – Animated feature film project, selected at Cartoon Movie 2026.



Vanessa Ann Sinden

South Africa 

ANIMATION PRODUCER,
CONSULTANT, STRATEGIST,
FOUNDER OF AMAHLE MEDIA

SPECIALITY
ANIMATION PRODUCTION

With 27 years of experience across film, television, and animation, Vanessa Ann Sinden spent 16 years at Tiggerfish Animation Studios before creating her own studio, Amahle Media. She is passionate about thoughtful development, strong pre-production, and championing African stories on the global stage, bringing local creators and international collaborators together to build ambitious, commercially viable projects.

- ✔ Produced Africa's most successful animated films, including Adventures in Zambezia, Khumba, and Seal Team.
- ✔ Led high-profile projects like "Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes", "Kizazi Moto : Generation Fire" and "Supa Team 4" for international partners such as Disney and Netflix.
- ✔ Founding supporter of African Women in Animation, a network of over 2,400 members providing mentorship, networking, and career opportunities for women across animation, VFX, and gaming in Africa.
- ✔ Initiated 7 accelerator labs as the Triggerfish Story Lab, Netflix's Writer's Lab and UNESCO Creator Labs, platforms that have launched the careers of many creators.



Quenum Ahissi Miryam Akissi Océane

Côte d'Ivoire 

ANIMATOR AT AFRIKATOON

SPECIALITY
2D/3D ANIMATION

Quenum Ahissi Miryam Akissi Océane works as an animator at Afrikatoon studio. With a background in application development, her work focuses on the production of animated series and short films, supporting different production phases, particularly 2D and 3D animation and set design.

- ✔ Worked on Roi Keita Season 3, an animated series broadcast on TV5Monde and Canal+.
- ✔ Directed La Belle et le Serpent, her own short animated film presented at FESPACO in 2025.
- ✔ Currently working on animated series such as Gbassman Season 1 and Footgo Season 2 at Afrikatoon.

On the market side, we know that by 2050, one in three children in the world will be African.

The future global audience for youth content is on the continent. And with African streaming estimated to grow by more than 10% annually, a strategic window is opening: African animation made for its own audiences, but also capable of circulating internationally.

The challenge today is to move from visibility to industrial consolidation: studios run by women, appropriate public policies, balanced co-productions, specialized schools, and African distribution platforms.

Spark is dedicating this issue to these economic and strategic players in a burgeoning sector. Because African animation will not only win through its images. It will win through its builders.

This mapping is an industrial signal.

Twenty women to watch, because they are already shaping the African animation of tomorrow.



Les contes de Raya - Studio KÄ



Keko Africa - Smids Animation Studios

IN CONVERSATION WITH DAMILOLA SOLESI

Damilola Solesi is a Nigerian animation director, producer, and writer. After studying computer science and business, she decided to follow her dream of making animation and founded Smids Animation Studios in 2010.

Since then, she has brought a unique energy to the world of animation through creations and projects that are as powerful as they are inspiring. Her short film Hadu has been selected at more than 30 festivals worldwide, winning 8 Best Animation awards.

In a conversation with Spark, she speaks about her career path, the challenges of being an African woman in animation, and how she built Smids Animation Studios into what it is today.

Your career bridges computer science and creative storytelling. How does this dual background shape the way you approach animation and tell African stories today?

My foundation in computer science taught me how to think in systems, how ideas move from concept to execution, how workflows are optimized, and how technology can be leveraged to solve problems. Storytelling, on the other hand, trained my emotional intelligence: how to connect with audiences, express identity, and preserve culture. In animation, these two disciplines are inseparable.

When telling African stories, I'm constantly balancing creativity with structure. I think about narrative arcs alongside production pipelines, emotional resonance alongside technical feasibility. This dual background allows me to build stories that are not only culturally grounded and emotionally honest but also scalable, distributable, and technically sound for global platforms. It has helped SMIDS Animation Studios operate with both imagination and precision, ensuring that African stories are told with excellence, not compromise.

As a woman leading an animation studio in an industry that is still largely male-dominated, what challenges have you faced, and how have they influenced your leadership style?

One of the earliest challenges I encountered was having my expertise questioned sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly. In funding rooms, technical discussions, or negotiations, I often had to prove credibility twice over. Rather than hardening me, these experiences shaped a leadership style grounded in confidence, preparation, and empathy.



**Damilola Solesi, Founder of SMIDS
Animation Studios, NIGERIA**



Smids Team

I learned early on that leadership is not about dominance but about clarity and consistency. Today, I lead by empowering others, setting high standards, and creating environments where people feel seen and heard. Being a woman in this space has also made me deeply conscious of representation and mentorship. I am intentional about opening doors, especially for young women, because I know firsthand how transformative access and belief can be.

You've built SMIDS Animation Studios into a strong reference for children and family animation in Africa. What do you see as the biggest opportunities and constraints of producing animation from Africa for local and international audiences?

Africa's greatest opportunity lies in its originality. Our cultures, folklore, humor, and lived experiences are vastly underrepresented in global animation, and there is a growing appetite for authentic, non-Western narratives. Children everywhere want to see stories that feel fresh, playful, and honest, and African stories offer exactly that.

However, constraints still exist. Access to funding, distribution, and infrastructure remains a challenge, particularly for studios creating original IP. That said, digital platforms have shifted the landscape. Channels like Keko Africa on YouTube allow us to reach audiences directly, test ideas, build communities, and demonstrate market value without waiting for institutional approval. The challenge now is scaling these successes sustainably.



Keko Africa - Smids Animation Studio

SMIDS has maintained creative quality while remaining operational for over a decade. How did you structure your business model to balance artistic ambition with financial sustainability?

From inception, we were clear that sustainability was as important as creativity. We built SMIDS on a hybrid model combining commercial client work with the long-term development of original content. Client projects helped us maintain cash flow and operational stability, while original IP allowed us to invest in storytelling, experimentation, and legacy-building.

We were also intentional about growth. Rather than expanding too quickly, we focused on refining our processes, building a strong core team, and reinvesting profits back into development. This approach allowed us to grow steadily while protecting our creative integrity and avoiding burnout, a critical but often overlooked aspect of creative entrepreneurship.

Can you share one key strategic decision—whether related to funding, partnerships, or distribution—that significantly impacted SMIDS' growth, and what other African studios can learn from it?

One of the most impactful decisions we made was choosing to prioritize ownership of our intellectual property, even when it meant slower financial returns. Retaining IP ownership gave us creative freedom and long-term value.

This decision directly led to projects like Hadu, our multi-award-winning short film, which opened doors to international festivals, educational platforms, and series development conversations. The recognition Hadu received reaffirmed that African stories, when told with care and quality, can travel globally. For other studios, my advice is simple: think beyond immediate profit and invest in assets that will grow with you.

Training and mentorship are central to SMIDS' vision. How important is capacity-building for the future of African animation, and what advice would you give to young women entering the industry today?

Capacity-building is foundational. Without skilled storytellers, animators, producers, and technical professionals, the industry cannot thrive or scale. At SMIDS, training is not an afterthought, it is embedded in our culture. We see knowledge transfer as a responsibility, not a favor.

To young women entering animation, my advice is to be both patient and bold. Master your craft, understand the business, and don't shrink yourself to fit expectations. Seek mentorship, but also trust your instincts. Your voice matters, and African animation needs diverse perspectives to truly flourish.







PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

MAGHARIBA FI SAMAA

November 16, 1955. At Rabat-Salé airport, King Mohammed V of Morocco returned after more than two years of exile. But in the sky, another historic moment unfolded before the jubilant crowd: a young woman dropped leaflets from an airplane. It is through this extraordinary scene that “Maghariba fi Samaa”, the ambitious historical animated series led by Artcoustic Studio, begins.

The Girl in the Sky

“Maghariba fi Samaa”, meaning “Moroccans of the Sky”, tells the true story of Touria Chaoui, a young girl who discovers, with wonder, the joy of flying through the sky.

Supported by her father, a journalist with a passion for theatre, she decides to enroll in a school reserved for the European elite. This marks the beginning of a struggle filled with obstacles, humiliation, conspiracy and harassment in a context shaped by racism and misogyny that left little space for new voices.

Despite the challenges posed by the conservative elite, Touria demonstrates unwavering determination, eventually becoming the first Moroccan and Arab female pilot at the age of 16.

The series unfolds through two intertwined timelines when Touria’s father tells her the story of Abbas Ibn Firnas, a scholar who is regarded as one of the pioneers of aviation for having carried out one of the earliest documented attempts at gliding flight using a machine of his own design.

The narrative takes place between Morocco and Andalusia, portraying two figures who left a lasting mark on the history of aviation.

Between historical rigor and creative freedom

Maghariba fi Samaa was, from its conception, envisioned as a family-oriented project. While the political context represents a complex subject, the story of Touria Chaoui, her struggle, her journey and her legacy are meant to be accessible to young audiences and serve as a source of inspiration for future generations.

The series, therefore, is built on extensive archival research and documented historical references, a necessary and rigorous process aimed at preserving narrative coherence while transmitting a part of the country's cultural and national heritage.

But beyond its historical dimension, creation remains at the heart of the project. The studio chose to produce the series entirely in 2D animation for its human, expressive, warm and timeless quality. This visual language is particularly well suited to historical storytelling aimed at a wide audience. Moreover, traditional animation has been experiencing a renewed interest in contemporary productions, as it allows greater emotional depth in artistic works.

The visual references are rooted in the world of aviation, with particular attention given to the representation of the sky and the reconstruction of Morocco during the 1950s, in the period leading up to the country's independence in 1956. The historical direction, along with the attention paid to Moroccan contextual details, contributes to the series' symbolic and visual richness.

The production is based on close collaboration between writers, artists and historical consultants, allowing documentary accuracy to coexist with narrative accessibility.





Maghariba Fi Samaa



Moroccans at the heart of their own stories

The project was born from a desire by Artcoustic Studio to tell inspiring Moroccan biographies through animation, while addressing the shortage of locally produced historical content accessible to children. It also seeks to offer a national alternative to the dominant international content market and to transmit heritage through animation. The series is produced entirely in Arabic dialect in order to highlight the country's cultural diversity.

The studio had already pursued this vision in 2025 with *Tourat al Maghrib*, an animated documentary capsule project showcasing Moroccan heritage in its many forms.

Ghita Amrati, Creative Director at Artcoustic Studio, led the project, ensuring its coherent execution. She worked closely with the production team, supervised by Dalila Driouicha, the art direction led by Mohammed Ouazif, as well as the creative team and historical consultants. This collaborative structure strengthened the overall coherence and final quality of the series, the result of over ten months of production.

The project also involved students from Flow Motion School, an animation school based at Casablanca, giving them the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the field of animation.

Accessible broadcasting strategy

Maghariba fi Samaa is a 30-episode series, with four-minute episodes, and is broadcast on 2M, the country's second national channel, which records an average daily audience share of approximately 30%. This level of visibility confirms the continued importance of television within Moroccan media consumption habits, particularly during the month of Ramadan, when family-oriented programming occupies a central place in viewing behavior.

Scheduled from Monday to Friday at 4 p.m., a time when children are typically returning from school, the production aims to establish itself as a regular viewing appointment for young audiences. For viewers who miss the television broadcast, Maghariba fi Samaa is also available on the channel's replay platforms. On YouTube, the first episode has already accumulated more than 30,000 views.

Furthermore, Artcoustic Studio is pursuing international ambitions for the series, which will soon be broadcast on TV5Monde, opening access to millions of children and families worldwide.

A timeless message

Maghariba fi Samaa carries values of perseverance, gender equality, justice and women's empowerment. These themes, from the 1950s to the present day, resonate with the realities experienced by many women around the world.

The story of this pioneering female figure in a historically male-dominated field such as aviation recalls the struggles of yesterday and today, but above all the reasons why these struggles continue across generations.

“ As a director, I am deeply committed to the presence of women in History, especially when they have been invisible or marginalized. This reflection naturally extends to my next project, ZYRIAB, a historical narrative featuring a heroine who will also challenge the course of events. Through these stories, I return to the Morocco-Andalusian connections and continue exploring the power of women to transform history. ”

Ghita Amrati, creative director
at Artcoustic Studio.



Tokur

LA CITROUILLE



A la Recherche du Légume Star - Art'π Prod

INSIDE THE JOB LOUISETTE RATSIVAHINY, ANIMATION PRODUCER

Louissette Ratsivahiny is a Malagasy producer, director and storyteller. She grew up between Madagascar, France and Switzerland, and chose to return to her homeland to make animation while the Malagasy industry was still in its early stages.

In 2025, she made history by directing, producing and distributing *À la recherche du Légume Star* ("In Search of the Star Vegetable"), the very first animated series produced entirely in Madagascar.

Today, she looks back on her career as a producer and talks to us about her daily life, divided between her many roles.



Louissette Ratsivahiny, Producer, Madagascar

The turning point

Originally, I came from live action. I learned a lot there, but I also quickly felt the complexity and heaviness of managing people: the actors, the constraints, the realities of the set. At the same time, I was developing a very personal story, inspired by the journey of my young niece. I wanted to explore emotions and situations that I found difficult to carry with real bodies, existing faces already loaded with projections.



Fara - Art'π Prod



Fara - Art'π Prod

That was when animation became an obvious choice. It offered a more accurate, freer, almost ideal space to tell certain stories. Working with characters that do not exist paradoxically allows you to go further in emotional truth. I then understood that animation was not just a technique, but a language in its own right, capable of carrying both intimate and universal stories.

The plurality of roles

I define myself first and foremost as a director. But in Madagascar, you can't afford to stay within a single framework. You have to dive in, be versatile, learn to do a bit of everything. My journey was also marked by a major break with my former producer. We didn't share the same vision or the same values. Even though I owe him a lot, that difference was a turning point: it pushed me to spread my own wings. That's how I became my own producer, taking the reins of my projects. Producing was not an initial goal, but a necessity to stay aligned with what I wanted to tell and how I wanted to tell it. Today, these roles feed into each other and allow me to move forward with more freedom and coherence.



A la recherche du légume Star - Art'π Prod

Everyday life

I don't really feel like I'm working, even though daily life is often a constant race between professional life and family life. There are moments of fatigue, sometimes even discouragement. I can feel low, like anyone else. But overall, I'm doing well.

What drives me is this feeling of being exactly where I'm supposed to be. My work is deeply connected to my life, my values, and my commitments. Even in intense periods, there is a kind of clarity that allows me to keep going.



Fara - Art'π Prod

Producing in Madagascar

Madagascar is a very complex environment. There isn't really a structured industry, there is little funding, and above all, a huge lack of training and visual literacy. It was from this observation that, together with Pierre, we created the Maison du Cinéma Malgache. At the beginning, we were alone. Today, since 2023, other initiatives have emerged, other centers have been created. This shows that a movement is being born. Visual education is gradually becoming a priority, and for me, this is an extremely encouraging sign for the future of cinema and animation in Madagascar.

The long term and what's next

This year, we are preparing a live action production. It's a return to my roots, but a different one, shaped by everything animation has taught me. I am not leaving animation, however: I want these two forms to coexist. My ambition is for all this work around visuals and creativity to be deeply rooted in Madagascar. This hybrid approach, combining animation and live action, will also be part of the teaching within our school. The idea is to pass on a broad, open vision and give future generations the tools to invent their own paths.

ON THE GROUND AFRO WOMEN IN ANIMATION



Afro Women in Animation

An event that celebrates the work of African women in animation? Yes. Afro Women in Animation is an initiative by the Nigerian studio Basement Animation. The festival brings together professional women from across Africa for panels, screenings, and networking opportunities. The first edition, held in March 2025 in Lagos, gathered more than 300 participants.

An initiative to change the game

While animation is growing rapidly across Africa, women remain underrepresented in visibility, opportunities, and decision-making spaces. Many talented female animators were already creating, but often without access to mentorship, funding, or clear career pathways. The initiative was created to change that narrative by making women more visible and supported within the industry. At its core, Afro WIA is driven by a simple belief: representation creates possibility, and seeing women lead, create, and succeed helps open doors for many more to follow.



Afro Women in Animation

An Impactful Launch

The inaugural Afro Women in Animation Festival focused on awareness and visibility, helping participants understand that animation extends far beyond drawing and includes a wide range of creative, technical, and production roles. While centered on women, the festival welcomed broad participation and reinforced the value of shared learning across the industry. It led to tangible outcomes, including scholarships for technical training, emerging careers in animation, and meaningful connections that sparked future collaborations. Ultimately, the first edition achieved its goal: opening minds, expanding possibilities, and helping participants take real steps into the animation field.

A Balanced Industry Ecosystem

The Afro Women in Animation Festival is designed as a balanced ecosystem serving both animators and producers. Animators benefit from hands-on workshops, mentorship, portfolio reviews, and direct access to studios and collaborators, helping them grow their skills and transition into sustainable careers. Producers engage with the business and leadership side through sessions on funding, production, IP, distribution, and scaling projects into viable studios. The festival intentionally creates spaces where both profiles meet through pitch forums, labs, and networking. Beyond the event, selected participants continue into post-festival initiatives like the Production Lab, where they develop projects together.

The next step

The second edition of the Afro Women in Animation, taking place on March 21st, will be a focused, high-impact day designed to move participants from inspiration to action. The program includes a curated panel featuring African and international women sharing practical insights on careers, storytelling, funding, and industry pathways, alongside screenings of animated short films highlighting women-led work. Participants will also benefit from one-on-one portfolio review sessions with industry professionals, offering constructive feedback and guidance. The day will conclude with dedicated networking moments, creating space for meaningful connections, collaboration, and continued community building beyond the festival.

INDUSTRY WATCH

Every day, bold and ambitious creative projects led by determined and talented women are coming to life. Here are a few exciting updates!

Naija childhood memories finally get a mic!

Say welcome to Iye Talo-Talo On Air — a series of 2–4 minute animated video capsules where Ose, aka Iye Talo-Talo, takes you back to millennial memories of growing up in Naija, when life felt “simpler.”

Produced by Blac Onyx Studio, this project blends comedy and nostalgia with a distinctly Nigerian flavor.

The first five episodes are already available on YouTube.

One more step!

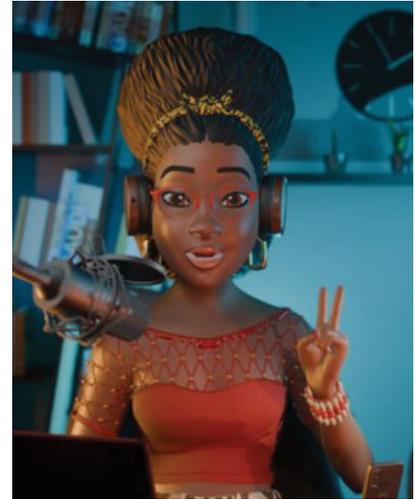
The long-feature animation project Alaosky, written and directed by Malagasy Raïssa Ioussouf and Volana Razafimanantsoa, has been selected for the Booster Création program of the Malagasy association ONY.

This boost will support the project’s further creative development. Alaosky had already been selected last year for the pitch sessions at MIFA - Annecy International Animation Market as well as at the Forum Création Africa.

A New Creative Force Is Born !

Animation producer Vanessa Sinden, with her 16 years of experience at Triggerfish, has now launched her own studio: Amahle Media — a development studio working with talented visual development and story artists from across the African continent.

They support studios and creators in developing stories, worlds, characters, and visual languages.



Iye Talo-Talo On Air



Amahle Media

MARCH EVENTS

March lights up the animation calendar with events and opportunities as different as the sun and the moon, all driven by the same goal: amplifying creative voices. Beyond Afro Women in Animation, here is a small selection of what this month has in store.

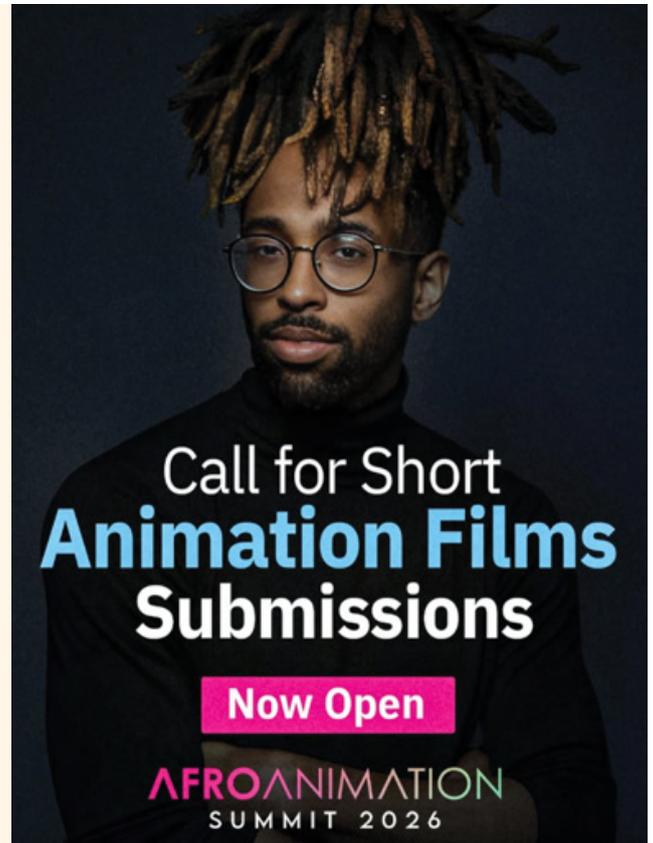
AfroAnimation Summit 2026 - Short Animation Film Awards

AfroAnimation is a platform which reunites nearly 8,000 global creators from around the world. The summit features main-stage panels, studio recruiting sessions, an awards ceremony and much more. Entries are currently open for the Short Animation Film Awards, giving filmmakers the opportunity to share their animated stories with the world.

Who can Apply : creators of animated short films (up to 10 minutes) that highlight bold storytelling and diverse perspectives.

Submission deadline : April 10, 2026

More information: filmfreeway.com/AfroAnimation-ShortFilmAwards2026



Africajarc Cinema 2026

Africajarc celebrates the seventh art in all its originality, surrounded by music, literature, theater, and more. Filmmakers from Africa and beyond are invited to submit films for the cinema section that focuses on the continent. Works inspired by books or telling original stories are especially welcome.

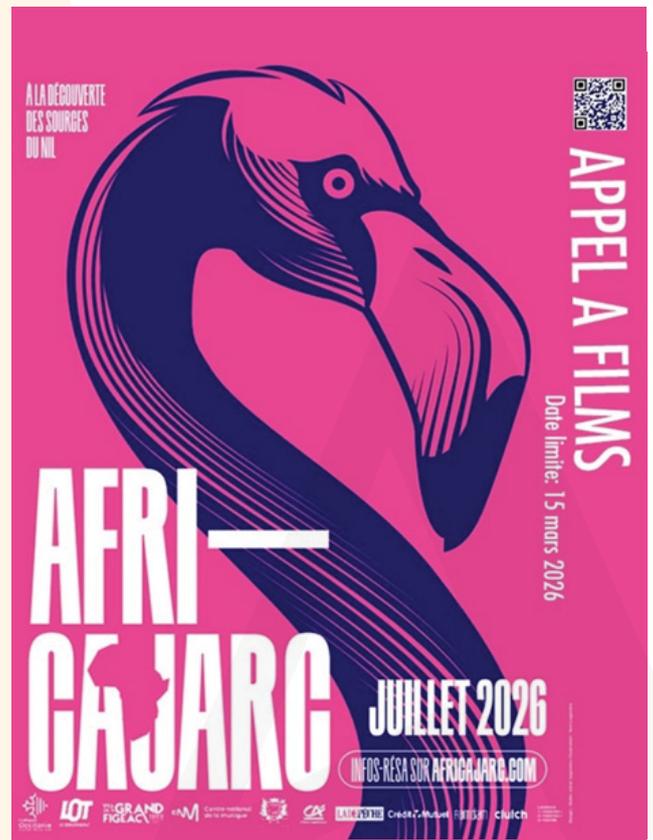
Who can apply: Filmmakers in animation, fiction, or documentary, with productions completed after January 1, 2023, and featuring at least one author, producer, or director of African origin.

Submission deadline: March 15, 2026

Event dates: April 23–24, 2026

Location: Cajarc, France

More information: [instagram.com/africajarc](https://www.instagram.com/africajarc)



The Ikon Awards - film and television awards

The iKon Awards rewards exceptional individuals and organisations that carry the spirit of creativity, innovation and enterprise in the Film and Television society in 32 categories, including animation.

Event date: March 28, 2026

Location: Kampala, Uganda

More information: theikon.org/awards



Namibia Film Week

Namibia Film Week is a week-long celebration of cinema designed to engage local audiences while spotlighting the country's creative talent. The event presents a rich selection of short films, student works, documentaries, feature films, and animation by Namibian filmmakers.

Event dates: March 12–16, 2026

Location: Windhoek, Namibia

More information: filmfreeway.com/NamibiaFilmWeek

Fountain International Film Festival (FIFF)

The Fountain International Film Festival (FIFF) is a global showcase celebrating films that share the Gospel of Christ. The program includes film screenings, panel sessions, industry insights, and an awards ceremony celebrating excellence in Christ-focused filmmaking, including live-action and animation.

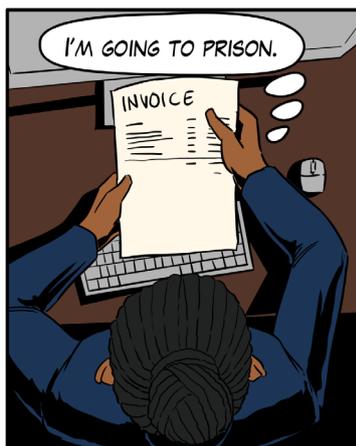
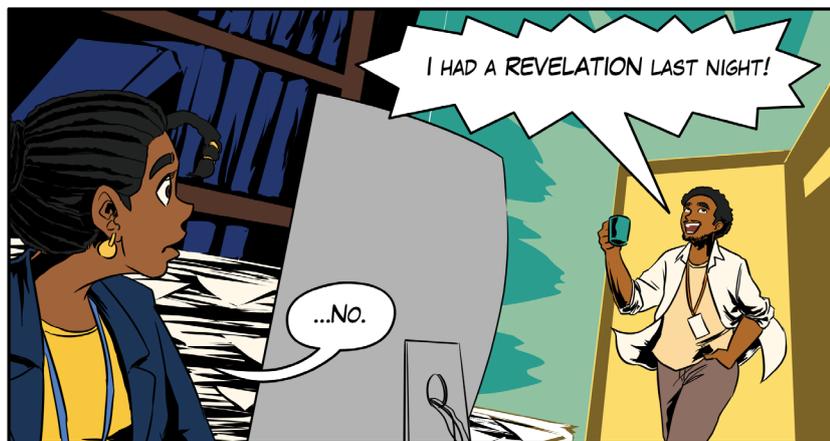
Event dates: March 6–7, 2026

Location: Lagos, Nigeria

More information: [instagram.com/fountainiff](https://www.instagram.com/fountainiff)



THE NOTES





“ I'm specifically focused on telling African stories using the stop motion animation medium and building an ecosystem to enable more beautiful African stories going forward via this absolutely hands-on medium of animation. I'm also passionate about inspiring young people to push boundaries in this space as stop motion is rarely explored by African creatives, particularly at a time when the vast majority of animators are drawn towards making things easier with artificial intelligence. ”

Esther Kemi Gbadamosi

Stop Motion Animator,
Filmmaker, Creative Director -