



The official newsletter of  
**San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild**  
 Looking for updates and missed information?  
 Check for it at *SFBAPG.ORG*

*SFBAGP is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit tax exempt organization*

**VOTE! VOTE! VOTE!**

Hello from Tree on the nominating committee. It's that time of year again where guild members are given the opportunity to vote for new candidates to fill spots on the board. Annually, we have board members that have either met up with term limits, or come to the end of their first non-consecutive three-year term, choosing to run and serve our board again.

We have an exciting ballot of candidates for members to choose from this year. Your official ballot will be emailed to you on May 5th and your response (vote!) will be due by the 20th of May. Keep an eye out for that.

The following are bios of our slate of San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers Guild candidates for 2023. We have 3 openings to fill on the board. Please vote for our candidates.

**Samuel McGinnis (or Uel)**

Puppet pictured: Merlinnis

Hello, I am Samuel McGinnis (or Uel).

I am a professional psychic medium and performance artist, and I often include puppetry in my services and art. When I first joined the guild

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Lee Armstrong  
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around a year ago, I received a lot of positive feedback and encouragement from board members. I would like to be able to give that back to other people. I am located in the South Bay, and I would like to start some small puppet meetups or other puppeteering events in this area, as well as throughout the bay. I'm passionate about sharing my growth with others and learning from them too!



## Lee Armstrong

I have always been captivated by puppetry and have enjoyed sharing this artform with others. A couple of years ago, I stepped off the Board as my parents in Nova Scotia needed more help. Now, I'd like to return to the Board.

I'm co-owner of Sonoma's Images In Motion, [www.imagesmedia.com](http://www.imagesmedia.com) which specializes in TV puppetry. My credits include everything from the original "Fraggle Rock" series & the film "Being John Malkovich" to PBS shows and commercials. For many years, I've taught "The Art of Jim Henson and the Muppets" at UCSC and have done workshops for local, regional and national P of A festivals.



The Guild provides a great opportunity to promote the art of puppetry in the Bay Area and I want to help with their mission.

## John Arnold

I have had a lifelong love of puppetry, and performing from watching the muppets and the many things Jim Henson and other TV puppetry of the 70s, and 80, to performing private puppet shows with my brother in our home. 12 years ago I started building puppets, and shortly after I discovered one of the workshops, love and support of the members of the bay area puppeteers guild. Spending Christmas I entertain people as Santa, and the remainder of the year support local children and community and school theaters help building props, costumes, and puppets for performances. In addition I enjoy supporting the guild and other non profit organizations with my skills as an IT professional. I've been supporting the Guild as webmaster, membership, and currently as president, and would like to continue support the guild on the board for another term.



## An Introduction to Giant Puppets and Non-Violent Direct Action

By Tree

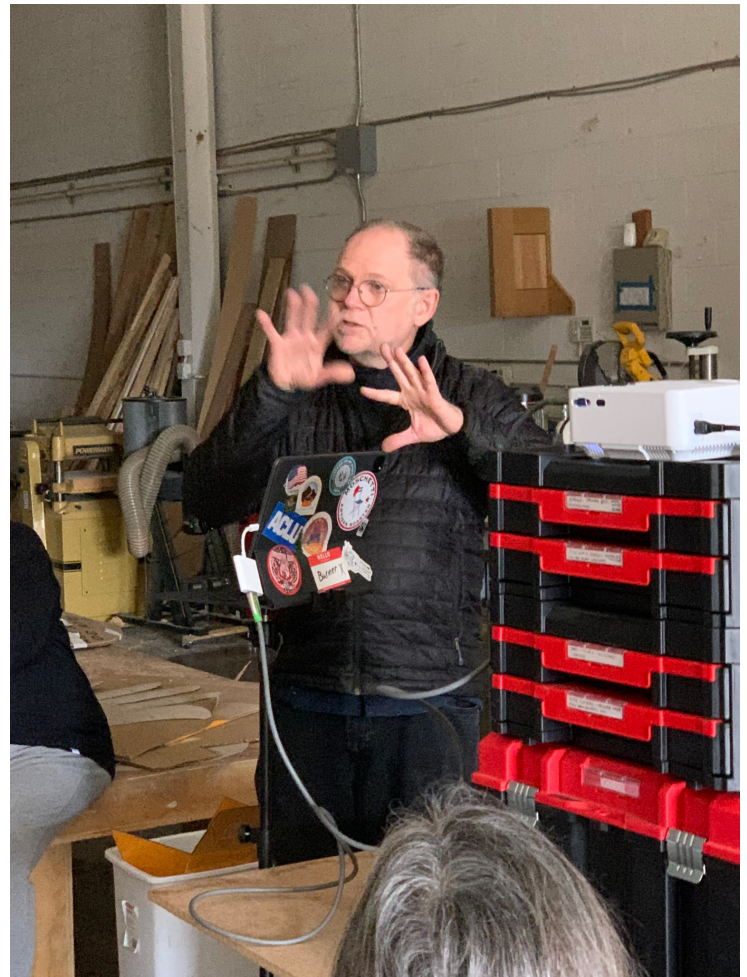
*When I retired in the summer of 2021, I was looking forward to devoting more time to my love and interest in puppetry. I never imagined at that point, I would end up helping and teaching folks how to create puppets for Non Violent Direct Action work. Now I find myself being called to action as a maker of giant puppets.*



I have been fascinated by the power of puppets to move audiences emotionally and in thought provoking ways. Puppets can be created to embody the characteristics of a subject in thoughtful and empowering ways. Given that, it seems a natural fit for puppets to become part of the activist's artistic tool kit.

This year marks the start of my involvement with Climate and Social Justice communities, groups comprised of activists involved in non-violent direct actions. For me, this work happens to involve giant puppets. They have been used for decades in protest work starting with the Vietnam War, most famously through Bread and Puppet Theater. I have long had an interest in becoming an activist and can see how I would end up here, creating giant puppets.

I am a member of Third Act!, a group created for folks 60 and older to become activists against the climate crisis, and for protecting democracy. It's sort of an umbrella group where participants from other activist groups can cross pollinate and support one another with an emphasis on older activists. I am also involved with a group called Xtinction Rebellion (XR), an international group of activists from around the world. They use street theater as a focus for activism, a good place for me to land and help bring giant puppets to life.



In early March, I had the opportunity to create and teach a workshop on building giant puppets to three activist groups in Sacramento. It was a lot of work, yet rewarding. It felt good to be putting my teaching and puppet-making skills towards



something I hope creates positive and much needed change in the world, especially around the existential climate crisis.

I was also involved in helping to build and create Dolores, our giant puppet character created for the Lamentors, which I am part of. We dress up in sack cloth, putting “Ashes” on our faces, standing quietly with down cast eyes and open downward held hands. We silently embody shared grief around climate change. Each participant wears a different issue



(such as: mega-fires, melting glaciers, rising seas, climate chaos, ...) pinned on the front and back of the costume, relaying the existential impacts of climate change on our planet. Dolores has become a larger than life embodiment of these issues for our group. Dolores had her debut at the recent climate action festival at the Oakland Museum of California on Friday, April 21st. There were several other giant parade and protest puppets at this venue including a puppet making table for the kids sponsored and run by the 1000 Grandmothers. I found the event very moving especially given that there were so many children and families present. Dolores had a good evening and an impactful presence.

I will write more about my involvement with giant puppets and activism as a series, one about the Sacramento workshop and the other about the creation of Dolores. So stay tuned for the next installment.

## A LITTLE SATIRE

Guild member Joel Schechter has been creating a little satire with a puppet at San Francisco rallies against fossil fuel. The photo here (taken by Art Persyko) shows Joel with his Trump puppet and a small sign. According to Joel: "I recently went to a San Francisco protest by Third Act against banks funding fossil fuel extraction. There were a lot of signs and banners opposing fossil fuel use. Some people had cameras and were looking for photo ops. I held up my Trump-faced hand puppet, which had around its neck the label "FOSSIL," and about ten different people wanted to photograph it. It's a small political cartoon which they frame and post. No other work required of me besides holding the puppet when they ask me to pose for a photo. Of course I may need to change the caption (to "PARDON ME") or the puppet (a different fossil?) later on."



## Giveaway: a Sawyer's Rotomatic 717A Automatic Focus Slide Projector

From Sue Brinton, guild member

*(Editor's note: the image is from the internet but appears to be the right model)*  
 The projector belonged to my father who used it to bore any captive audience with Kodak colored slides of our family camping vacations. After taking Wendy Morton's shadow puppetry class, I used it as an easily transportable lighting source to take to Stagebridge or to a classroom. (It survived a flashmob of third grade shadow puppeteers in my friend's classroom.) I can imagine using it to



project settings or handcrafted backdrops for mask, puppetry, or mixed media performance art. Listings on eBay show photos of the equipment. I live in San Carlos and can be contacted through the newsletter at [newsletter@sfbapg.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbapg.org).



# How a Puppet Inspired a Remarkable Moment of Engagement

Written by Daniel Gill and shared through

**The Puppet Circle Early Childhood Consulting**

**Higher Education**

**San Francisco, CA**

**Puppetry-based learning that increases the meaningful participation of all children in inclusive settings.**

As soon as Christian arrived at the table, he began squirming in his chair, grabbing my teaching materials, and looking at me with only brief glances. As I began the morning's art class, which is part of San Francisco Children's Art Center's Artists in Schools program, I wasn't sure how or if



the four-year-old boy was going to participate. In general, the children in this center need significant support with process art. In past classes, the children seemed confused about how to engage in our class. I wondered if this was related to my limited Spanish, my teaching practices, if process art making was new to these students, or if their development may have been impacted by the COVID pandemic.

Determined to support the children's comprehension, I prepared a digital puppet book called Toby Makes a Collage. Toby is a small dog puppet that visits the classroom to support the children's engagement. He is also somewhat of a rockstar. In the digital book, Toby



visually demonstrates each step of the collage process. I also brought the actual puppet, in his little house, to the classroom. I told the children the puppet would come out of his house to see their art at the end of the class.

Even with these supports and incentives, Christian's focus drifted between his collage, watching the children build on the rug with blocks, and grabbing other children's glue brushes. I didn't know if he was comprehending any of the visual supports. I kept Christian at the table as long as he seemed able to engage. When he seemed to reach his limit, I excused him. He placed his collage on the drying rack then joined his friends in the block area.

As the other children completed their artwork, I reminded them that Toby wanted to see their artwork. This was helpful because it motivated them to participate in cleanup and stay seated for a brief, yet focused, reflection time. As I pulled out Toby's little house, I noticed Christian leaving the block area. He went back to the drying rack, pulled out his collage, and held it up to me. After a moment of confusion, I asked, "Do you want to show your artwork to Toby?" Christian nodded, then sat down at the table to patiently wait his turn.

Adriana, my teaching partner, captured the moment with a photo. After the class, she and I had coffee at a nearby cafe and reflected on Christian's participation. "The thing with humans," she told me, "is that you just can't write them off." I couldn't agree more. Especially when a puppet is involved.

## Editor's Note

I just helped a friend string these delightful figures she made out of thread spools to make them into marionettes. The puppets are charming and it is a wonderful idea so I thought I would share in case it inspires some of you in your creative adventures.



Send future newsletter articles and other puppet related stuff to [newsletter@sfbapg.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbapg.org) before the last day of the month.