

Accolades for animations at National Youth Film Awards

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Animated films won big in the student category at the National Youth Film Awards held last Saturday.

Themed “New Dawn, New Beginnings”, the seventh edition of the awards aimed to celebrate resilience in a post-Covid-19 world.

The broadcast was hosted on Facebook Live for the second year in a row, following phase two (heightened alert) restrictions.

The awards received 330 submissions, with 56 films nominated for 22 prizes. Some of the entries were filmed entirely at home.

Fresh off a win last year for her film *Sexy Sushi*, Lasalle College of the Arts graduate Calleen Koh raked in the accolades for her animation *To Kill The Birds And The Bees*.

It weaves together three separate stories of four Singaporeans

encountering sexual situations through their day. It won Best Art Direction, Best Screenplay and Best Original Music.

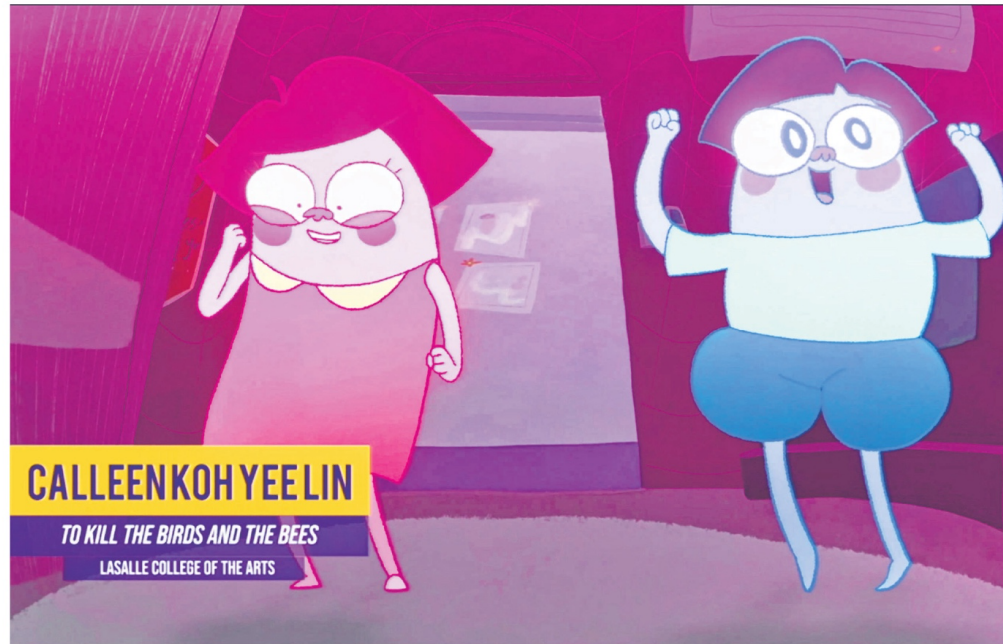
Koh, 22, says: “The stigma surrounding sex and sex education in Singapore is a topic I have wanted to explore for some time now as a lack of knowledge of these topics may prove detrimental for many.

“The animation medium allowed me to do this with an element of unhindered surrealism.”

She graduated this year and is now an animator and designer at independent animation studio Finding Pictures.

This year’s animation boom is to be expected, says Nanyang Technological University graduate Yeow Su Xian, 25, who won the Best Animation award for *Full Circle*. She is now a designer and illustrator for a book publisher.

Her film presented the Moon and the Earth’s relationship through a sleepless, semi-con-



scious night, blending 2D and 3D aesthetics using a silk-screen medium.

“The physical aspect of film-making has been severely affected by the pandemic. Movement and space have been limited and live-action film-making is just harder, especially in genres like magical realism,” she says.

“I wanted to present a scientific idea – in this case, the movement of the Moon and the Earth – in a palatable, non-empirical and narrative format.

“My animation skill-set and the pandemic’s restrictions came to-

gether to present this film.”

Live-action films, however, continued to reign in the Open Youth category, which is open to non-students aged between 15 and 35.

Dark Light by Vikneshwaran Silva, 33, bagged three awards including Best Director and Best Cinematography, with the lead actor, Gosteloa Spencer, 34, winning Best Actor.

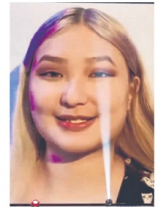
In the film, construction worker Mari seeks companionship on his day off, but instead gets into a misadventure he will never forget.

Producer and returning juror Juan Foo said: “Having an empow-

ered upbringing has nurtured savoir faire in these youths’ art,” referring to their sense of social sureness.

“We can see how they are leveraging digital technology to craft films and spread them exponentially. I look forward to seeing how these upcoming film-makers will tell stories that resonate with audiences, aside from being able to entertain, inform or inspire.”

The awards were first held in 2015 and this year’s winners received sponsored prizes worth more than \$70,000, including cash, equipment and services.



Lasalle College of the Arts graduate Calleen Koh (above) picked up several awards for *To Kill The Birds And The Bees* (left), about four Singaporeans encountering sexual situations through their day. PHOTOS: *SCAPE NATIONAL YOUTH FILM AWARDS