

Najja Akinwole

2D Animator and Illustrator

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Personal Bio

Animator, illustrator, and teaching artist with a passion for storytelling that bridges whimsy, emotional depth, and childhood nostalgia. My creative work, spanning 2D digital animation, puppetry, and children's book illustration, is deeply informed by my hands-on experience teaching multimedia art to young people from diverse backgrounds. I design and lead original curricula that center youth voice, creative storytelling, and exploration. This reciprocal exchange fuels my own artistic growth while reinforcing my commitment to inclusive, imaginative, and impactful storytelling with a hint of whimsy.

Experience

Guest Critique Artist | *Maryland Institute for College Art (MICA)*

October 15th, 2025

- Served as a guest critic for MICA's 2026 Senior Thesis Animation class, providing feedback on student animatics during a six-hour critique session.

Teaching Artist | *Westside Openworks*

October 2025 - Present

- Designed and led three family-friendly art workshops celebrating the new Westside location.
- Developed inclusive, hands-on curriculum for participants of all ages.
- Collaborated with staff to create engaging, community-centered art experiences.

Lead Media Instructor | *Wide Angle Youth Media*

June 2025 - Present

- Developed and taught multimedia art and storytelling curriculum for middle schoolers.
- Led community workshops in partnership with local organizations and museums.
- Co-taught summer animation classes through the YouthWorks program.

🎧(CAC) Media Arts Instructor | *Wide Angle Youth Media*

October 2024 - June 2025

- Taught visual storytelling to middle schoolers, fostering self-expression and media literacy
- Curated Open Labs workshops, providing hands-on media arts experiences for youth
- Collaborated with educators and community partners to amplify youth voices through multimedia

(CAC) Teaching Member Artist | *Americorps Community Arts Collaborative (CAC)*

September 2024 - June 2025

- Led community arts programs for marginalized youth and adults across Baltimore City
- Partnered and volunteered with local organizations to develop impactful, arts-based initiatives
- Designed curriculum to foster self-expression and storytelling through visual and media arts

Social Enterprise Management Intern | *Art with a Heart*

June 2024 - August 2024

- Managed logistics, media campaigns, and content for HeARTworks and the Youthworks Shop & Bop
- Supported Youthworks classes through teaching assistance, project samples, and classroom management.

Education

Bachelor's of Fine Arts | *Maryland Institute of College Art (MICA)* 2020 - 2024

Major: Animation Minor: Illustration Cum Laude

Community Teaching Artist Certificate | *Americorps Community Art Collaborative* 2024 - 2025

Awards | *How Was Your Day?* Animated Short Film Animator/Director

2025 Ontario Windsor International Black Film Festival: Best Animated Short

2025 Windows on North+Charles Exhibition

2025 Sea Slug Animation Festival: Jury Official Selection

2024 Sweaty Eyeballs Animation Festival: Best of Baltimore

2024 Dirty Popcorn Black Film Festival: Best in Show Experimental Film

2024 MICA Animation Festival: Golden Cockroach Best in Show Film

Technical Skills

- Adobe Premiere Pro
- Adobe After Effects
- Adobe Photoshop
- Tv Paint

Illustration Skills

- Children Storytelling
- Typography and Handlettering
- Puppetry Design
- Concept Art and Moodboarding
- Character Design and Development

Professional Skills

- Curriculum Design for Youth & Multigenerational Learners
- Workshop Creation & Facilitation
- Public Speaking & Arts Instruction
- Collaborative Program Development with Schools & Nonprofits
- Art Direction for Youth Exhibitions & Projects

Festival | *How Was Your Day?*

2025 Baltimore International Black Film Fest.

2025 Ontario Windsor International Black Film Festival

2025 Cardiff Animation Nights

2025 East Bay Comedy Festival

2025 Tavern Brawl

2025 Sea Slug Animation Festival

2025 Charlotte Black Film Festival

2025 Philly Sketchfest Comedy Film Festival

2024 Sweaty Eyeballs Animation Festival

2024 Dirty Popcorn Black Film Festival

2024 MICA Animation Festival