

MONTSERRAT COLLEGE OF ART

Jared Hall Interview by AZ Green | Fall 2026

AZ: Do you mind if I record?

JARED: Of course.

AZ: Okay, awesome.

JARED: You've got it on now?

AZ: Mm-hmm.

JARED: Okay. Yeah. You know, we all make, like, little films and animations throughout our life, but I spent the first four years– my bachelor's is in illustration– so I spent four years just doing that. Maybe like some little animated things I made for myself, or like occasionally if I could work it into a class. But my master's was just animation. They required you to make a film, at least like 5 minutes long.

JARED: Yeah, so that was like, okay, I got to finish this film. Specifically, it's called a first year short. Like, when you go into CalArts, that's where I was studying, they're like, "oh, you gotta do a film in your first year just to have an experience making a film." And I was supposed to finish it in the one year. It took longer than a year, it took 2 years. And then when I finally finished it, I just put it in as much festivals and stuff as I could. And it's like, I don't think it's the perfect film or anything like that, but there is no single piece of work I've ever made before or since that was as impactful.

AZ: And which one was that? The name of that one? The title for the listeners?

JARED: Anansi the Spider.

AZ: Yeah, that was the spider one? Yeah that was a really great one. I did watch that one.

JARED: Oh, you did! Yeah, it's just on my website.

AZ: I feel like a lot of people really love to see sort of, like, contemporary mixtures of taking old fairy tales or like folklore type things and seeing them brought to life, like just seeing modern creators take them and bring new life into them. And I think that's popular for, you know, everybody. Everybody just loves that.

JARED: I am all about that stuff. You know, like, I think old stories have survived for, like, a reason. And if they're going to continue to survive, they need to be, like, reinterpreted and brought back again and again.

AZ: And you take some from like your own culture, right?

JARED: Yeah, I'm Jamaican.

AZ: So like, a lot of your work is based on that. And I think that that's really something a lot of people can, like, relate to, but also can see sort of like the unique quality there because it's sort of different from every, you know, wherever you are from throughout the world.

JARED: Oh, for sure. Um, I've had a really interesting relationship with that, um, because, you know, growing up in Jamaica, I spent my first 18 years of my life there in high school. It was, like, required that you could not make art that wasn't related to Jamaican stuff. And I thought that was so limiting, because— so I did a lot of research on Caribbean folk tales and myths because I was like, oh, okay, I like doing myth. But by the end of high school, I was like, oh my god, like I hate that they're forcing me to do this. But then when I was doing my bachelor's, I was like, oh, I could just do whatever I want. Which is funny because, like, during that period of time, I didn't really make anything to adapt to the Jamaican or Caribbean thing. It wasn't until my master's. I was like, “oh, shoot, wait. Now I'm ready.”

AZ: Yeah!

JARED: To actually take it on and do— like, I think I'm actually ready to take on Anansi. You know, that's another thing. Because you're nervous about touching like those, like really those cultural figures, you know?

AZ: Yeah, for sure. I feel like a lot of those retellings, like, there are so many big ones, even just like in Hollywood, that get so much— they're just so heavily, like, critiqued because they're not the original, and people want them to match or, like, honor it. But I think that there are a lot of ways to do that, artistically. And I think you do a wonderful job of it. I mean, your animations have a very bold style that I feel like carries across through all of them. Did you always have a style like that or did you kind of find it as you've made animations?

JARED: It was... It was a real trial.

AZ: Yeah, trial and error?

JARED: Oh, yeah. It's funny because I literally just did an artist talk about this yesterday.

AZ: About finding your style?

JARED: Yes. About everything, because it all connects back to Anansi as well. But like again, you know, high school, I was just sort of doing whatever. There was a lot of emphasis on realism, which is kind of annoying because I'm like, oh, we're making art; I want to be able to

make stuff that could not happen in reality. But then I go into my bachelor's and, you know, oh, it was at RISD, by the way. I was studying illustration there and it was really fun. But I was just learning a lot of stuff? Like, I was like, oh, okay, I can do things with charcoal, I can do things with pen, I can paint, blah, blah, blah, like I was learning all this stuff, but I still didn't know what my style was. Like we had a big show at the end of the four years where you put up all the pieces you're proud of. And I looked at my wall, found the pieces I, you know, liked the most, and I just thought, like, "where's the vision?" Who am I as an artist? I still don't know.

But then, I don't know, I'm not one of those believers that like, the school you go to really matters that much. I think it was just having that experience and being in that period of my life. But literally, as soon as I started my masters, like, I picked one piece that I'd worked on while I was at RISD, and I just made a whole series out of it. It was like a creature from mythology, a Manticore. I just kept drawing different creatures from it. I was like, oh, shoot, this is my style. This is my style. I kept doing it. And I drew the first drawing of Anansi, and I used that to pitch the film to my class.

AZ: And then you just... found it.

JARED: Yeah, I just found it through there. Like that film helped me so much to realize.

AZ: So your first four years of college, you were just fully illustration, like fully static. You're like, not moving. I mean, you said a little animation here and there?

JARED: Yeah, it was interesting because, you know, it was an illustration program, but every now and then I'd be like, can I make this move? You know, put it in after effects and see if I can do a little thing, or like I do one animation class every now and again. I didn't want to do it. RISD has its own animation program, but for whatever reason, I thought, like, I kind of like working on paper and, you know, it was much more digital, um, from what I remember.

AZ: That's a big thing, I feel like, because you do have that, like, kind of paper texture in your animation, and I feel like maybe at first, that kind of seems like a roadblock, where it's, like, you're looking for this analog feel with these digital materials. I can totally see how that might be like a... I don't know, like...

JARED: No, absolutely. It's, like, I love working on paper. And that's, that's part of the, again, why I wanted to do the illustration program because there was just so much. I loved doing stuff with charcoal and paper and graphite and whatever, but I was never sure, okay, how can I actually like, I didn't realize I could animate like that, you know? Especially because most of—and part of the reason why my film, Anansi, looks the way it does, is because I hadn't seen a lot of stuff like it, like visually. Most animation is really clean, you know, and digital. And I wanted mine to look like a children's storybook come to life, you know? I wanted to be fully shaded and like, I don't know if there's not even, there are a lot of scenes in that film that don't have compositing. So a character's moving and I'm literally drawing the background around them every single time. Yeah. So, like, it's kind of, I don't know if I'd ever do that again.

AZ: I was gonna say, it sounds *really, really* fun to make.

JARED: Oh, my gosh, very tense, but like, I had a lot to prove, I think, because for real, Like, I left my bachelor's thinking, like, oh, maybe I don't animate. Like maybe animation is not going to be my thing. But now, you know, here I am. So...

AZ: Yeah, you're like settled. You're like, this is it.

JARED: This is it.

AZ: I mean, would you consider, like, would you consider yourself, like, still multimedia because you still have that, like, sort of paper, sort of analog feel in your animated work?

JARED: What does multimedia mean in this case? Like, different mediums?

AZ: Yeah, would you say that, like, would you consider yourself a multimediam artist?

JARED: I would say so. I mean, it's interesting because I literally approach my animation like my illustration. Like, to the extent that I'm working on paper and like doing a lot of the same stuff in the same processes. I always work in, for example, I always work on paper in pencil or in black and white or in gray first and add the color digitally.

AZ: Right. You said, so you said you submitted this film, to, like, a bunch of different things. Have you submitted stuff before or was this your first time submitting this?

JARED: That was my first time submitting.

AZ: So your first time submitting and you got in?

JARED: I mean, okay, let me be clear. I submitted to, like, a lot of things. I only got into like...

AZ: But so that's still— so what would be your advice? What would you say, like, for someone who's looking to get their stuff into a film festival? Would you say that's the way to go?

JARED: Okay, so first off, factor in the fact that some of these places are going to ask you for money. You know? Additionally, I don't think submitting to an online festival is usually worth it. Unless you're really sure that you can get an award and then, you know, that just looks nice to have an award. But most of those online festivals, especially if their fee is like \$60 or whatever, not worth it. I don't think I've ever paid more than like 40. You know, most of the time less. And for the ones I paid more, it was like, okay, I actually really want to get into this festival, like a Slamdance or a Sundance or something like that, you know? So budget for that.

JARED: Put in, it's kind of like, um, kind of like looking for work, honestly. You just apply to as many places you can and then you don't think about it. Put it out of your head because you're gonna get a lot of rejections, but it's totally fine. You know, that's just how it is. Other stuff for,

like, people working in festivals... have a poster ready. Have a trailer ready. Have a log line ready.

AZ: Mm-hmm.

JARED: Yeah, you know, like a little blurb. This is my film in one or two lines. A lot of people say like, oh, um, are they gonna care if this is the first place I screened it at? You know, like something like, oh, like some film festivals want to be their first time screening this film, you know? And I honestly don't think most of them care. At least the ones that matter don't, you know? Because the biggest film festival I ever got into was Slamdance, and that was one of the last film festivals I got into. So they did not care that I'd screened at a bunch of other places. It's more important that you don't put your film out online during your festival run. That would probably influence people because y'know, they can just watch it online, why'd they even come to the festival?

AZ: Mm-hmm. So wait until post-festival.

JARED: Yeah, wait until you're like, okay, I've gone to all the places. Honestly, maybe hold off for like one year, two years before you put it online. Because most festivals are like, okay, we'll accept stuff that is at its oldest 2 years old. So, just something to keep in mind.

AZ: Those are all very good tips. I'll make, like, a Jared's step-by-step guide.

JARED: Good thing you're recording this, because I just threw a lot of stuff at you right away.

AZ: It's all here. So you're teaching foundation classes this year. So you're working with freshmen. Do you remember— I mean, foundations is such an interesting period of time for people. I feel like your first year of art school, especially, like you're learning so many things as an artist. Like, are there any lessons you feel like you learned in your foundational years that you've kind of taken with you, that you're taking with you into this teaching position now?

JARED: There's some stuff that, um... Well, I think, honestly, foundations is the period where you're learning the most, you know? Like you're just being thrown so much information. So there's a lot of stuff that I learned there that I end up using, you know, because like, oh, I never worked with charcoal before, I never animated with AfterEffects before. But honestly, the most important thing I've learned, or at least I try to learn, is that it's okay to ask for help, you know? Like, I think people come into college and they're like, "I'm good. I can handle everything by myself. Don't need help." And it's totally fine to *not* know everything and to, like, reach out to your teacher or your friend or whoever you feel comfortable with and ask them for advice. It's like the whole point of college. And I feel like a lot of people come into college wanting to just handle it all by themselves, but you don't have to, and you shouldn't have to.

AZ: Yeah. I feel like this is also a good place to come for that because we have such a close knit— like students can really connect with their teachers because their classes are so small. Um, but, so when you're, like, coming up with ideas for your animations, is it the story that inspires you first or is it, like, characters that inspire you or like, what's your process?

JARED: It's tricky. I'll say, it varies.

AZ: Depends on what the piece needs?

JARED: I think I'm still finding my process. Like, I'm only one and a half films into me making films and like having a defined style, you know? And, um, For me, like for Anansi, the thing that I needed to do first before I even started animating was writing. You know, I needed to write down the script. In fact, part of my picture of the film was live performing the script of the film to my teacher. I mean, but that's also because Anansi has a really strong oral tradition. you know, like storytelling like that.

JARED: On my next film, which was much more experimental– and I mean, it's on my website, but it's not like out yet, but the idea with that film was, it was going to explore a world that combines the deep ocean and outer space. So planets float like bubbles, stars swim like fish. No characters. More like a Fantasia type journey. And that is imagery I've had in my brain for years, since my bachelor's. I always wanted to do a piece that explored ocean and space stuff together. Yeah. But it wasn't until, um, during my masters, I did a writing exercise where I thought, like, oh, why don't I make little video games and set in this place? Like you click the arrow down and then you have the options to keep going down, keep going down, keep going down. Writing for that finally helped me solidify the idea in a way that it hadn't been before. So, honestly, writing is one of the first things. I need a written thing, to have something written down first before I can even get to the visual.

AZ: I think that also totally makes sense that stories would inspire you so much for your work as well. Yeah, that's definitely really interesting. I think a lot of people can relate to that process or can learn from that process, even... Um, what was I about to ask you? Oh, I was gonna ask, so you have your studio here? What kind of space, like, do you create when you're working? Like, so a lot of like just drawing out on paper and scanning that in?

JARED: Yeah, okay. So, I mean, an ideal working place has a *long* table, that I can just like stretch out, lie on top of, and I have a rolling chair that can go from one end to the other end, and big sheets of paper that I can draw on as much as I want. And then there's another table full, a huge scanner, a huge flatbed scanner. And then I have a monitor because a lot of times what I do is I'm tracing my own animation. So I do it digitally first and then I have a monitor laid down flat and I'm tracing on top of that. I do that a lot. That's what the setup is more like in my apartment.

AZ: That's a pretty good setup. I like that. I like that idea. I like your dream of the infinite table. That's a beautiful, beautiful image. I think we could all– We should get one of those, right? I don't know. Um, is there a piece of folklore or mythology that you would, like, recommend people to, like, look into to get a feel for what inspires your work?

JARED: Mm, tricky, tricky, tricky. I don't know. I mean, I think my work is a pretty good introduction to Anansi. It is kind of designed like that, to be an introduction. It's tricky because a lot of the stuff I'd recommend are harder to get access to. It's like... for example, in

Jamaica, we have, like, there was a really famous storyteller, Miss Lou, and she would do Anansi stories, and she was, like, one of the best. So if you really want to get into that Anansi stuff, you should definitely look up some of her performances. I'm sure there are recordings of them. Um, But like, I know a lot of people think about the Anansi storybook that's out. I really wanted to advertise more Jamaican retellings of it, you know? Because that's where– It is slightly different than even the African stuff. There are, like, slight differences between their versions of Anansi and ours.

AZ: That's interesting.. I feel like for a lot of cultures, sort of the oral tradition of carrying down stories has kind of been lost. A lot of people now that there's writing, they kind of just... you know, write it down, or maybe it'll be a private thing between, I don't know, you could read to your kids at night, and that's kind of it. But I love it when that's carried on. And I like that you kind of try to honor that in your animation in your own way. But, um, I think that's all the questions I have for you today. Thank you so much for sitting down and chatting with me. Do you have any, like, final words of advice for any students? Reading this?

JARED: Hmm. Okay. If you're worried about finding your style, the only way to do it is to learn everything. Learn everything and then do what comes the most naturally. You can only really have your style after you have that backlog of knowledge to draw from. And then forget what you don't need.

AZ: Perfect. Throw it out. That's great advice. Thank you so much!

JARED: No problem.