**Who you are, your background - how did you get into animation?**

Skeleton Girl is the first film created and produced by Skeleton Girl Productions and the team behind Bleeding Art Industries, an award-winning entertainment production company based out of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Now in its 10th year of business, Bleeding Art - spearheaded by its founder and President Leo Wieser - has been providing mechanical special effects and custom fabrication for the film and entertainment industries for many years.

Leo and Bleeding Art co-owner Becky Scott always had in the backs of their minds the desire to create and produce their own work under the Bleeding Art name, by bringing together the expertise and resources the company had, teamed with the talent of others that came on board. They also wanted to create visually compelling, good stories that would resonate with people; and ones that would have a bit of a darker edge to them.

The team that came together for Skeleton Girl has a range of backgrounds. Leo's was originally production, lighting and costume design for theatre, and in more recent years, special effects and design. Steven came out of the editing and writing fields, and Becky has a marketing, writing, and business background.

Collin and Lisa - talented artists, model makers and sculptors - built Millicent's world and made real the graveyard that Leo remembered as a young child behind his grandparent's house in England, and which served as the seed that inspired this story.

Bringing the film to life is the amazing and versatile actor Elinor Holt as the narrator, and the astounding Tomasz Jakub Opalka, who created the original score. Director of Photography Aaron Bernakevitch and Doug Berquist provided the expert guidance needed as we navigated new and uncharted 3D territory.

Jump Studios is the film's post production editor, and Sync Spot Digital Audio Spot, the post sound.

Despite this wide-ranging skill set, none of us had had any experience shooting stop motion. Skeleton Girl was born out of a love of the medium and of the darker films that didn't always have a happy ending (think Grimm's only not as gory!). We also wanted to attempt something that could be constructed and filmed in house with the resources at our disposal without having to rent location space or bring in a large shooting crew. And we figured that shooting a short film with inanimate objects might be easier as our first film out the gate than shooting a feature with live actors!

**What are your recent productions, who it is aimed at, where might people see it?**

Skeleton Girl is our first film production. We think all ages (except for the very young who might be a bit scared by some of the tale) will find much to love about Skeleton Girl. A lot of thought, time and effort went into creating a beautiful and magical world, from Millicent's somewhat spartan room to the dreamy and captivating forest and cemetery. Small details are paid attention to, resulting in a lovely, visually compelling story and film. Add to that, the depth provided with the 3D element, some expert narration by Elinor Holt, and the orchestral music of Tomasz Opalka, and you have a short film that truly captivates.

Stop Motion and this kind of visual storytelling is something that seems to bridge generations, as evidenced by the fact that it continually springs up every ten years or so. Now that technology like Stop Motion Pro is available to the public we are seeing a huge number of students and hobbyists, as well as independent companies like ourselves, posting clips of their work on YouTube and Vimeo.

We are planning on taking the film on the festival circuit in order to get the word out there about the film and our company, and to secure theatrical (pre-feature) and non-theatrical distribution in different 2D and 3D platforms.

We also hope to secure financing for 9 more shorts which would form an anthology of similarly-themed short films under the title Twisted Tales for Demented Children™, with Skeleton Girl being the first.

**What hardware do you use (the facilities, lighting, cameras etc)?**

We shot Skeleton Girl in the Bleeding Art Industries shop, specifically in what was our prosthetics room, so we had a clean, quiet, and enclosed space to work in. This worked well in that our offices, equipment and materials are here so we were able to quite quickly pull things together as needed. We used halogens and LED light panels, the latter of which contributed to a few flicker issues, as light flicker – which is often imperceptible to the eye – tends to increase whenever a dimmer is used. Therefore we ran all of our lights at their highest settings and used flags and diffusion to bring them down to a usable level.

Camera used was a standard D90 with a Nikkor 24-85mm lens with manual aperture control. We had been using the standard 18-105 but we found we had flicker issues with it that we traced back to the automatic iris. We are using a PC with SMP and a Zalman Trimon 21.5" 3D monitor for checking our work on set.

**How you use SMP in the production - how does it help your workflow?**

SMP IS our workflow; there's no other way of saying it. For a program to take you from image capture straight through to .avi output is incredible. Having access to your original Jpeg or RAW files to work with is fantastic. If you have a shot that you love but the timing is a bit off or you have a bad frame part way through you can fix all of that on the day without having to worry about whether it can be altered in post. And features of DOP control, in-program editing, and system control of aperture and shutter speed makes the whole process incredibly easy.

**When you animate, how do you like to use Stop Motion Pro?  (Do you loop the animation and capture, do you use a keypad, do you use onion skinning – is there a technique you like to use?)**

We use mostly on screen keys but left-right for scanning frames, and onion skinning prior to each capture. We usually move the puppet, check onion skinning and correct as needed, then take frame.

**Can you tell us a little about how you make the imagery in your work? How do you make your puppets?**

We designed and fabricated models/sets for the film. Because we shot Skeleton Girl in 3D, this completely changed how we built these, and how we shot the scenes. Although we originally had someone contracted externally to build the main puppet armature, we found that we could not work with it, and opted to build it out of silicone (???). We discovered part way through the process that how the puppet was built did not work for us. Because of the choice of construction, we had huge challenges getting the puppet to move properly in tiny increments. We definitely learned through this process what we need to do next time when building the characters.

**What is next for you and your animation?**

We are hoping to use Skeleton Girl as the launching pad for a number of other similarly-themed shorts that will make up an anthology under the title "Twisted Tales for Demented Children™". Although we have other ideas and scripts in development, we are leaning towards completing this series of stop motion animated films given what we have learned along the way with Skeleton Girl.