

The Walt Disney Family Museum presents

## ***Directing at Disney***

**A new special exhibition based on the Disney Editions book by Don Peri and Pete Docter, celebrating the untold stories of early Disney animation directors**

On view beginning October 17, 2024

**San Francisco, September 4, 2024**—During D23: The Ultimate Disney Fan Event presented by Visa®, The Walt Disney Family Museum announced its latest special exhibition, *Directing at Disney*, inspired by the recent book of the same name written by Academy Award®-winning director and Chief Creative Officer of Pixar Pete Docter and Disney historian and author Don Peri—published by Disney Editions. Guest curated by Docter and Peri with the museum’s Director of Collections and Exhibitions Marina Villar Delgado, *Directing at Disney* will spotlight many of the legendary directors whose creative talent and innovations made Walt Disney’s animated films possible. Opening October 17, 2024, this original exhibition will be on view in the museum’s Lower Lobby and Theater Galleries.

*Directing at Disney* will showcase an extensive selection of rare film artifacts from The Walt Disney Studios and archival photographs featuring Walt, his early production teams, and legendary directors—dating as far back as the 1930s. Objects and ephemera on display will include detailed production and story meeting notes, storyboards, concept paintings, layout drawings, original sheet music, office memos, and hand-written letters. The special exhibition space will also feature touchscreen interactives and opportunities to scan QR codes to access additional digital content.

“We’ve all seen the classic Disney animated features like *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Pinocchio* (1940),” says Docter, “but virtually no one can name the directors. Yet they were key contributors to these films, often reflecting Walt Disney’s journey as a world class creative leader.”

Directors are often imagined as the people who sit on a soundstage and yell, “Cut!” But in animated films—in which there are no live actors—the animators require guidance in managing the complicated process of combining movement, story, and sound to bring their characters to life.

In the early days of animation, there were no directors. What appeared on screen was the domain of the animator. Beginning in the 1920s, Walt Disney led the creative direction of his productions, deciding almost every frame and shepherding the stories from inception through final revision. While not credited as such, Walt was, in fact, the first Disney director. But as his company grew and his interests progressed to live-action films, television, and theme parks, Walt expanded his team at the Studios and delegated greater responsibilities to the directors who worked for him, relying on their creative input and trusting their vision to complete the enormous task of producing both short and feature-length animated films.

While the role of an animation director has changed considerably over the last century, Walt Disney and The Walt Disney Studios have continued to remain at the core of that evolution.

“Walt expected everyone at Studios to ‘plus’ their work—to make it better, to take it to the next level,” remarks Peri. “This exhibition is plussing our book by providing an opportunity to engage with our story through film clips from the directors’ films, related artwork and personal artifacts, and at fun touchscreen interactive kiosks. Pete and I are so excited to see our book come alive in this exhibition!”

Directors featured in this special exhibition—including Disney Legends Ben Sharpsteen, David Hand, Hamilton “Ham” Luske, Wilfred Jackson, and Wolfgang “Woolie” Reitherman—each brought a distinctive style to their films. As Disney productions became bigger, costlier, and more complex, so did the work of these directors. *Directing at Disney* will guide guests through each stage of an animation director’s role and highlight how the work and legacy of the Studios’ original directors have influenced the Disney filmmakers of today.

“We have been honored to collaborate with Pete Docter and Don Peri over this past year to create this exhibition,” says Executive Director Kirsten Komoroske. “Their passion in bringing their co-authored book to life in this special exhibition is a testament to their commitment to preserving Disney history.”

*Directing at Disney* will be on view in the museum’s Lower Lobby and Theater Galleries from Thursday, October 17, 2024 through March 2025. Access to the special exhibition is included with general admission.

Docter and Peri will also present an exclusive talk on Saturday, October 26, 2024 at the ILM Premier Theater in the Presidio. The co-curators will delve into the process of writing their book that inspired the special exhibition, and will expand on the legacy and lasting impact of the directors who are featured in *Directing at Disney*. More information and tickets are available at [waltdisney.org/education/talks](https://waltdisney.org/education/talks).

### ABOUT DON PERI

Don Peri is a Disney historian and the author of *Working with Walt* and *Working with Disney*, in addition to being the coauthor of *Walt Disney's First Lady of Imagineering: Harriet Burns*. He has consulted for the Walt Disney Family Foundation and lectured on Disney history at many venues, including Walt Disney Animation Studios, Pixar Animation Studios, The Walt Disney Company Consumer Products Division, Disneyland (for Cast Members), and The Walt Disney Family Museum. He appeared in the documentary *Walt: The Man Behind the Myth* (2001). Don lives in Davis, California, with his wife and the memories of their dog, Indi.

### ABOUT PETE DOCTER

Pete Docter is a three-time Academy Award®-winning director of the Pixar films *Monsters, Inc.* (2001), *UP* (2009), *Inside Out* (2015), and *Soul* (2020). Starting at Pixar as the tenth employee in the animation group, Pete helped develop the story and characters for the world's first computer-animated feature film, *Toy Story* (1995), for which he became the film's Supervising Animator. Besides his directing work, Pete has storyboarded, written, and served as Executive Producer on many Pixar films. His career mirrors that of many of the directors in his 2024 book *Directing at Disney: The Original Directors of Walt's Animated Films*, giving him a firsthand understanding of the job in addition to insight into how it's changed since Walt's time.

### ABOUT DIRECTING AT DISNEY: THE ORIGINAL DIRECTORS OF WALT'S ANIMATED FILMS FROM DISNEY EDITIONS

*Directing at Disney: The Original Directors of Walt's Animated Films* by Don Peri and Pete Docter is an untold history collection that chronicles the progression of the animation director role during the 1920s through the 1970s. For students of filmmaking and management, this book serves as a go-to resource for a complex and sometimes technical role that demands precision. For all Disney fans, these personal portraits of Walt's closest creative leaders offer a fuller picture behind the stories, characters, and magical realms in Disney's beloved and respected animated films.

[directingatdisney.com](https://directingatdisney.com)

### ABOUT THE WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM

The Walt Disney Family Museum presents the fascinating story and achievements of Walt Disney, the man who raised animation to the level of fine art, transformed the film industry, tirelessly pursued innovation, and created a global, yet distinctively American legacy. Opened in October 2009, the 40,000-square-foot facility features innovative technology alongside a vast collection of historic materials and artifacts that bring Disney's achievements to life. Early drawings and animation, movies, music, listening stations, a spectacular model of Disneyland, and much more are presented in a myriad of interactive galleries. The museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in the scenic Presidio of San Francisco.

**Hours:** Open Thursday through Sunday: 10am to 5:30pm, last gallery entry at 4:30pm. Closed Mondays through Wednesdays and the following public holidays: January 1, Thanksgiving Day, and December 25.

- Where:** 104 Montgomery Street, The Presidio of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA 94129
- Tickets:** Main museum ticket: \$25 adults; \$20 seniors & students; \$15 youth.  
*Directing at Disney* special exhibition: Included with main museum admission.  
Museum admission is free for members, children under 5, and active and retired military personnel, in addition to their spouses/dependents with valid ID.
- Contact:** 415.345.6800 | [waltdisney.org](http://waltdisney.org)
- Follow:** [facebook.com/wdfmuseum](https://www.facebook.com/wdfmuseum) | Twitter & Instagram: @wdfmuseum
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