

A bold decision to animate

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By Michael Ordoña
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A still from the animated film "Last Day of Freedom" Photo: Dee Hibbert-Jones & Nomi Talisman

A line of expression

The wrenching documentary "Last Day of Freedom" is a finalist for the best short award by the International Documentary Association and has made it to the round of 10 for the Oscars. It tells the story of a man who relied on the justice system to properly handle his brother who had PTSD, only to see the worst possible outcome. The Bay Area artists who made it chose to animate the film.

"What animation did was give people an opportunity to see the story in a new way. We chose rotoscoping because we wanted every line, every wrinkle in the face to be legible," says Dee Hibbert-Jones, UC Santa Cruz associate professor of art and new media .

Her wife and creative partner, San Francisco artist Nomi Talisman, was working with the capital-case advocacy organization Community Resource Initiative when they came across the story of Manny Babbitt, as told by his brother, Bill.

"I spent three months drawing the scene with Bill crying," says Hibbert-Jones. "We showed it to people, half animated, half straight. People found it unbearable to watch Bill weeping on the video, but somehow the distance of the animation allowed people to sit there and hold his story."

"Last Day of Freedom" screens Thursday, Dec. 10, at the New Parkway in Oakland.