

Tec students to learn animation from an Oscar winner!



Photos: courtesy of Luis Manuel Villarreal.

*“I think that the field of **animation in Mexico** still faces many challenges, since there is no enthusiasm about trying to teach more people, but we can change that and develop the industry together.”*

This is the approach taken by **Luis Manuel Villarreal**, one of the animators on [Hair Love](#), the 2020 **Oscar-winning short film**. Now, he will also be a **distinguished professor** at [Tec de Monterrey](#).

The Mexican has **worked** in that industry **for more than 20 years**, and runs his own animation studio, called [Jugando en Serio](#).

His aim in joining the **School of Architecture, Art and Design (EAAD)** at the Tec is for those young people who are about to graduate to enter the world of professional productions.

*“My idea is to develop a short film where the students do the whole process, to unleash them as artists and put them on the right path to getting that short film **to festivals worldwide**,”* shared Villarreal.

https://www.instagram.com/p/CFLGqsqjiEs/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Jesús Baca, the Tec's Academic Talent Attraction manager, highlighted Villarreal's arrival as a **distinguished professor**.

*"He definitely fulfills the Tec's vision of having **the best faculty members**. In the field of animation, it's very much about having someone who has managed to position their work and has been recognized for that.*

*"We expect that a person with such a strong professional career will have more of an impact on the **development of students' skills**," said Baca.*



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Sharing knowledge

The Mexican animator shares that transmitting his knowledge of animation techniques to other people is something he enjoys and has experience in doing.

*"I give **workshops** in my studio at different points of the year. I don't have a school, I have an **animation studio**, but that allows me to give workshops," he stressed.*

Villarreal believes that it is essential to develop the talent of digital artists in order to give a boost to the **animation industry in Mexico**.

*“What we need in Mexico is to **work as a team**. If we don’t, we’ll never get anywhere,”* he said.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGECgTuoXRM>

On his arrival to the **Tec** in the **Mexico City region**, the artist hopes to be able to work on several projects with **Digital Animation** students.

“What I can do for the Tec is take these students up a notch, teach them to have their own path, their own style, to look beyond what they see, and make them realize that they are better than they thought,” he explained.

Jacinto Quesnel, Director of the Tec’s Art Department in the Mexico City region, said that Villarreal’s arrival will bring students even closer to **reality of the profession**.

*“Someone with Luis Manuel’s experience can help us a lot in connecting with what is being demanded in **the field** at the highest levels in the discipline,”* he highlighted.



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A passion for animation

*“For many, animation is a series of images which, passing before your eyes at a certain speed, gives you a sensation of movement, or ‘brings life’ to the characters. For me it goes further, animation is not what you see, but rather **what you feel when you see it**,”* said Villarreal.

From a very young age, he was captivated by animation. He remembers watching cartoons with his dad and asking him how the characters moved.

*“He took a sheet of paper and drew three very simple little circles, one with little eyes looking to the left, another to the center, and the other to the right, and he told me that the image moves when **the drawings go by quickly**.”*

“Then I was like ‘Wow, how amazing!’ From there, I got hooked on animation really, from when I was six years old,” he recalled.

A decade later, he began an internship at an agency in Monterrey and there had his first encounter with the animation industry.

Since then, he has striven to improve his ability, even using a VCR to pause the images and draw as much as possible within 2 minutes.

*“90% of what I know right now, I learned by myself, as there was no school. I played **VHS movies** all the time, I drew **frame by frame** to analyze the animations,”* he explained.

“(…) for me animation is not what you see, but rather what you feel when you see it.

Since 2004, he has had his own animation studio, **Jugando en Serio**, which has worked on a wide variety of projects, both inside and outside of Mexico.

*“For example, they came to us for tests to animate **Warner Brothers** characters because they’re bearing us in mind to start sending things to Mexico. We animate **Looney Tunes** and **Animaniacs** characters,”* said Villarreal.

Jugando en Serio, has already worked on character design for the film **Blazing Samurai**, which is still in production and directed by **Chris Bailey**, an animator at **Disney**.

One of their most recent projects is the children’s series **¿Y Charlotte?**

<https://www.facebook.com/120610614669676/videos/1463439727053418>

His hands on an Oscar

In 2018, when attending an event that brought together producers and studios like **Disney** and **Warner**, he met **Mike Owens**, who was animation director on **Animaniacs**.

*“He said, ‘I’m going to put you in contact with various studios that I know of because you produce very **high-quality work** and you should be working at another level’”,* Villarreal recalled.

Some months later, Owens called him and invited him to join the team that made **Hair Love**, a short film that tells of how a father has to deal with looking after his daughter and his home when his wife is hospitalized with cancer. Villarreal animated three scenes.

*“They were very beautiful and meaningful scenes for me. **They took me back to when I was very young, and my mother was sick. She had cancer too.** I had a profound connection with the story and animating it brought up all those feelings.”*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kNw8V_Fkw28

The **Sony Pictures Animation** short film gradually became recognized as one of the best, until it was nominated for an **Oscar**.

“I was already very happy. I went to see the Oscars at a friend’s house and when they said the name of our short film, we all jumped up and started shouting,” said the animator.

When he went to the **Sony** studios in Los Angeles to celebrate winning the **Oscar**, he met director [Matthew Cherry](#) in person and received his congratulations.

*“He said, ‘here, take a picture with the **Oscar because it’s also yours**, it’s not only mine: it belongs to the whole team.’*

“That’s when you realize the maturity of a project in which everyone is important,” he shared.

Reflecting on his current aspirations, Villarreal shared that he now wants to **win an Oscar with one of his own projects** made by his own studio. That will be a trophy which demonstrates the talent that exists in Mexico.

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