

MOMO CAO

NEW YORK, NY

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INSTAGRAM · @MOPALEKKO

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ANIMATION DIRECTOR · 2D ANIMATOR · ILLUSTRATOR · VISUAL ARTIST ·
INDEPENDENT

PROFILE

New York. MFA from Pratt Institute, BFA from School of Visual Arts. Independent animation director, 2D animator, illustrator. Films include *Not Alone* — Cartoon Brew Award at ASIFA-East's 56th festival (2026), 20+ official selections — and *In the Winter* — Animation Silver Award, International New York Film Festival. Fluent in the full independent animation pipeline, concept through festival circuit. Additional work in commercial animation, platform content, live events, gallery support.

EDUCATION

PRATT INSTITUTE · NEW YORK

2022 – 2025

MFA, 3D Animation and Motion Arts / Digital Arts

GPA 3.79 — thesis: *Not Alone*

SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS · NEW YORK

2014 – 2018

BFA, Computer Art, Animation & Visual Effects

GPA 3.58 — thesis: *In the Winter*

CENTRAL ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS HIGH SCHOOL · BEIJING

2011 – 2014

Visual Design / Fine Arts

2026 CARTOON BREW AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ANIMATION

Cartoon Brew × ASIFA-East Animation Festival, 56th Edition

Not Alone

2025 BEST MFA MOTION DESIGN

Pratt Institute, MFA Digital Arts

Not Alone

2025-26 AWARDS

Night of Shorts · Cannes Arts Fest

Not Alone

2025-26 FINALISTS

Spiritus Short Film Award · Nieves International Christian Film Festival · Mental Health Film Festival

Not Alone

2025-26 OFFICIAL SELECTIONS — 20+

Pixel Vienna Animation Festival · Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival · New York Shorts International Film Festival · Georgia Shorts Film Festival · 33 International Film Festival · Braga Science Film Fest · Atlanta Women's Film Festival · New York No Limits Film Series · Open World Animation Festival · TrixFilm · Beijing Indie Short Film Festival · Meliora International Film Festival · Northeastern Animation Club Film Fest · GRRL HAUS CINEMA · Mental Filmness · Qinling Mountains Film Festival · Christian Family Film Festival · Cherub Film Festival · Charlotte Asian Film Festival · New York Lift-Off Film Festival

Not Alone

2019 ANIMATION SILVER AWARD

International New York Film Festival

In the Winter

2023 OFFICIAL SELECTION

Aphelion Film Festival, Rome

In the Winter

2019 OFFICIAL SELECTIONS

Tokyo Lift-Off Film Festival · Beijing Independent Short Film Festival

In the Winter

EXPERIENCE

INDEPENDENT ARTIST / ANIMATION DIRECTOR

2018 – Present

FREELANCE / MOPALEKKO — NEW YORK & REMOTE

- Independent 2D/3D animation, social media shorts, music videos, character illustration, visual development, branded content.
- Full pipeline lead: concept, script, storyboard, animatic, design, animation, compositing, editing, color grading, delivery.
- Original character-based IP and merchandise — animation as worldbuilding and product storytelling.

MARKETING INTERN / GALLERY & SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT

Apr – Jul 2026

VILLAGEONEART — NEW YORK

- Gallery operations, exhibition openings, social media content, digital marketing research.
- Animation and illustration experience in public art events, workshops, community engagement.

CONVENTION ARTIST

Sep 2025 – Present

ANIME NYC / ANIME BOSTON / FANIMECON — FREELANCE

- Original illustrations and merchandise; live commissions at anime conventions.
- Booth management, direct sales, social media promotion testing original IP.

2D ANIMATOR

Sep – Dec 2025

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, DIVISION OF THE ARTS & HUMANITIES — REMOTE

- 2D animation and motion graphics for an arts and humanities project — storyboarding, visual experiments, video assets.

ANIMATION DIRECTOR

May 2019 – Mar 2020

IQIYI / DANQING YINGHUA — BEIJING

- Directed motion comic / animated series Yan Huo (厌火), episodes 1–12.
- Comic panels translated into animation: character motion, camera rhythm, transitions, delivery workflow.

STORYBOARD ARTIST / ASSOC. ANIMATION DIRECTOR

Oct – Dec 2020

BILIBILI GROUP — BEIJING

- Ys VIII Mobile: storyboards, cinematic cutscene visual storytelling, shot planning, animation rhythm for a mobile production pipeline.

ASSISTANT TO DIRECTOR

Jul – Oct 2020

CCTV (CHINA CENTRAL TELEVISION) — BEIJING

- Production support on documentary series A Taste of China: A City, A Flavor.

CREATIVE LEAD / MOTION GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Sep – Nov 2018

CADCAMNYC — NEW YORK

- Visual branding, video advertising, website redesign, motion graphics, illustration.

ARTIST STUDIO INTERN

Nov 2018 – Feb 2019

MARCIA GROSTEIN STUDIO — NEW YORK

- Updated inventory and database records; organized and maintained the artist's materials including images, bios, and press files.
- Hands-on studio experience supporting day-to-day operations.

REMOTE CREATIVE ILLUSTRATOR

Jul – Sep 2018

STUDIO IN THE BOX — REMOTE

— Illustrations, character designs, visual assets for books, social media, and web.

HOSPITALITY & FILMMAKER LIAISON

Jun – Jul 2018

NEW YORK ASIAN FILM FOUNDATION / FESTIVAL — NEW YORK

— International filmmaker transportation, event logistics, screening operations.

GRAPHIC DESIGN INTERN

May 2016

ALIBABA GROUP — NINGXIA, CHINA

— Advertising flyers, posters, and product packaging.

SELECTED PROJECTS

NOT ALONE

2022 – 2025

Writer / Director / 2D Animator / Visual Artist

Experimental 3-minute 2D animated short — MFA thesis. Cats, chimerism, mental health, symbolic rescue. Nonlinear and metaphor-heavy: dreamlike transitions, repeated symbols, color as emotional language. Cartoon Brew Award for Excellence in Animation at ASIFA-East's 56th festival, 2026. Awards: Night of Shorts, Cannes Arts Fest. Finalists: Spiritus Short Film Award, Nieves International Christian Film Festival, Mental Health Film Festival. Selected at 20+ festivals including Pixel Vienna, Tokyo Lift-Off, Beijing Indie Short, Meliora, Atlanta Women's Film Festival, New York No Limits Film Series, Open World Animation Festival, and more.

IN THE WINTER

2017 – 2018

Director / Editor / Animator / Painter / Character Designer / Sound Designer

SVA BFA thesis animated short. Animation Silver Award, International New York Film Festival. Official selections: Aphelion (Rome), Tokyo Lift-Off, Beijing Independent Short Film Festival.

YS VIII MOBILE

2020 – 2021

Storyboard Artist / Animation Director

Mobile game cinematic cutscenes — storyboarding, visual development, animation direction. Translated comic narrative into cinematic language for a mobile production pipeline. Associated with bilibili Group.

YAN HUO (戾火) — MOTION COMIC SERIES

2019 – 2020

Animation Director

Directed animated series episodes 1–12, adapting comic panels into motion. Character motion, camera rhythm, editorial pacing. Associated with iQIYI / Danqing Yinghua.

A TASTE OF CHINA: A CITY, A FLAVOR

2020

Assistant to Director

Documentary series production support. Associated with China Central Television.

NEKOA OYA / MOPALEKKO

Ongoing

Personal Animation & Illustration Project

Original characters, short-form animation, social media work, cross-media extensions. A self-contained visual world built through animation, illustration, character design, and merchandise.

SKILLS & SOFTWARE	ANIMATION / DIRECTION 2D animation · animation direction · storyboarding · animatics · character animation · clean-up & coloring · compositing · editing · color grading · sound design · cinematic language	VISUAL / DESIGN illustration · character design · concept design · visual development · motion graphics · graphic design · packaging / merch design · brand visuals · photography	SOFTWARE Nuke · After Effects · Premiere Pro · DaVinci Resolve · Toon Boom Harmony · Photoshop · Illustrator · Clip Studio Paint · Media Encoder · Assimilate Scratch · Animate / Flash · Final Cut Pro · Pro Tools · Maya · ZBrush · Substance Painter · Mocha Pro · Procreate / Procreate Dreams · SyncSketch · Lightroom
LANGUAGES Mandarin Chinese — native English — professional ADDITIONAL SKILLS Group facilitation & leadership · hospitality & meal planning · presentation & AV support · guest logistics & transportation coordination PRESS Cartoon Brew — "Momo Cao's Not Alone Wins First-Ever Cartoon Brew Award at ASIFA-East Festival" Cartoon Brew — "Momo Cao's Experimental 'Not Alone' Blends Memory and Metaphor"	CONTENT AREAS Experimental animation · independent short films · music videos · branded content · social media · character-based IP · exhibition and art project support	AI & EMERGING TOOLS Claude · ChatGPT · Midjourney · various generative AI tools for ideation, visual exploration, and production workflow optimization	
	CanvasRebel — "Meet Momo Cao" The Animation Blog — "Short Film Spotlight: Not Alone"	BoldJourney — "Meet Momo Cao"	