# Animator Serafima Serafimova uses rotoscoping to reveal enduring NHS trauma in Covid aftermath



By 2024, the echoes of the COVID-19 pandemic had begun to fade for many, yet for London-based animator and director Serafima Serafimova, that chapter was far from closed. Her latest short film, *The C Word*, screened at the BAFTA-qualifying Brighton International Animation Festival, serves as a poignant reminder of the lingering emotional toll of the pandemic, particularly through the lens of Alyssa, a frontline medical worker. The film compels viewers to reconsider their understanding of grief and trauma, inviting them to engage with the uncomfortable realities that arise from mass suffering.

"Like much of the world, I was still trying to shake off the lingering trauma of COVID-19 and focus on the future," Serafimova reflects. She shares how a chance meeting with Alyssa, who had witnessed unimaginable suffering in one of London's largest hospitals, reignited her desire to explore a deeply personal project. "She'd served on the frontlines... and had been through hell," Serafimova continues, acknowledging the profound impact that Alyssa’s experiences had on her creative direction.

To vividly portray Alyssa's journey, Serafimova utilised rotoscoping—a technique that blends her fine art training with cinematic storytelling. This creative choice allowed her to work independently and maintain a visually distinctive style. By condensing a two-hour interview with Alyssa into a focused narrative, she crafted powerful imagery, layering over 9,800 hand-drawn frames with attention to detail. The film's monochrome palette, punctuated only by a muted blue hue, serves as a symbol of the NHS, representing both the emotional weight of the situation and the lasting effects of trauma.

The sound design complements the visual language, eschewing dramatic crescendos for more subtle auditory elements. Serafimova employed reverb and low, pulsating sounds to echo the internal turmoil experienced by frontline workers, further blurring the lines between memory and reality. “It carries the weight of responsibility, grief, and trauma that Alyssa still lives with every day,” she notes.

Serafimova's deliberate approach to the film reflects her broader artistic philosophy, which often focuses on themes such as human connection and societal issues. Prior to *The C Word*, she explored similar notions in her earlier works, which highlight personal experiences intertwined with broader societal narratives. Her previous film, *FLAWED*, provides a stark commentary on body image and societal standards, while *Still Life* captures the essence of human movement against the backdrop of enforced isolation during lockdown.

Despite the weighty subject matter of *The C Word*, Serafimova imbues the film with an understated urgency, aiming not to sensationalise but instead to invite introspection. She remarks, “There are no grand statements, only a steady invitation to pause, reflect, and remember.” In a culture often inclined to gloss over discomforting truths, this film serves as a crucial reminder that the spectres of shared trauma linger long after the immediate crisis has passed.

As the film continues to navigate the festival circuit, Serafimova's aim extends beyond accolades; she seeks connection and understanding. “I often get a strong urge to create personal work—stories that matter to me,” she explains, hoping to resonate with audiences willing to confront uncomfortable emotions. Through artful animation and storytelling, *The C Word* not only memorialises the struggles faced during the pandemic but also challenges us to rethink our relationship with memory and trauma as we move forward.

Through her exploration of Alyssa's story, Serafima Serafimova captures an essential truth: remembrance is not merely about looking back but also about shaping how we choose to progress. The reflective nature of her work encourages a collective dialogue about the emotional ramifications of COVID-19, urging us to embrace the complexities of remembrance and healing.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/why-animator-serafima-serafimova-made-a-covid-19-film-in-2024/), [[2]](https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/why-animator-serafima-serafimova-made-a-covid-19-film-in-2024/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/why-animator-serafima-serafimova-made-a-covid-19-film-in-2024/), [[3]](https://www.serafimaserafimova.com/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/why-animator-serafima-serafimova-made-a-covid-19-film-in-2024/), [[4]](https://artgrid.io/insights/serafima-serafimova-interview/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://directorsnotes.com/2020/06/26/serafima-serafimova-still-life/), [[6]](https://www.stashmedia.tv/freeze-frame-short-film-serafima-serafimova/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/why-animator-serafima-serafimova-made-a-covid-19-film-in-2024/), [[7]](https://directorsnotes.com/2019/07/31/serafima-serafimova-flawed/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/why-animator-serafima-serafimova-made-a-covid-19-film-in-2024/), [[4]](https://artgrid.io/insights/serafima-serafimova-interview/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/why-animator-serafima-serafimova-made-a-covid-19-film-in-2024/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.creativeboom.com/inspiration/why-animator-serafima-serafimova-made-a-covid-19-film-in-2024/> - In 2024, London-based animator Serafima Serafimova released 'The C Word', a short film that delves into the lingering trauma of COVID-19 through the perspective of Alyssa, a frontline medical worker. The film premiered at the BAFTA-qualifying Brighton International Animation Festival and employs rotoscoping techniques, combining Serafimova's fine art background with film. The monochrome visuals, accented with a muted blue tone symbolising the NHS, aim to evoke the emotional weight of the pandemic's aftermath. The sound design mirrors Alyssa's internal disquiet, blending atmospheric vocals to blur the lines between memory and reality.
3. <https://www.serafimaserafimova.com/> - Serafima Serafimova is a London-based director, editor, and animator with a diverse portfolio of short films and animations. Her works include 'The C Word' (2024), 'Doing It For Dylan' (2022), 'The Unfair Sex' (2022), 'Still Life' (2020), 'FLAWED' (2019), 'Touch Yourself' (2018), and 'ALONE' (2015). She is also a senior editor at the ethical agency Nice and Serious and contributes as a programmer and writer for Short of the Week and Directors Notes. Serafimova's animations often explore themes of human connection, societal issues, and personal experiences.
4. <https://artgrid.io/insights/serafima-serafimova-interview/> - In an interview with Artgrid, Serafima Serafimova discusses her creative process, influences, and experiences in the animation industry. She shares insights into her favourite female animator, Anna Mantzaris, and how she stays updated with industry trends through platforms like Vimeo and her roles at Short of the Week and Directors Notes. Serafimova also reflects on the challenges and rewards of working in animation, particularly the time-consuming nature of rotoscoping, and her approach to turning concepts into visual elements using tools like DaVinci Resolve.
5. <https://directorsnotes.com/2020/06/26/serafima-serafimova-still-life/> - Directors Notes features Serafima Serafimova's 'Still Life', an animation celebrating the beauty of movement and human connection during the COVID-19 lockdown. The film employs rotoscoping techniques to depict dancers in a stylised design, capturing the energy and fluidity of movement. Serafimova discusses the inspiration behind the project, focusing on the longing for freedom and closeness during a time of enforced isolation. The animation received positive responses for its artistic expression and emotional resonance, highlighting the universal desire for human interaction and movement.
6. <https://www.stashmedia.tv/freeze-frame-short-film-serafima-serafimova/> - STASH Magazine showcases 'Freeze Frame', a short film by Serafima Serafimova that captures the magic and motion of the Winter Olympics. The animation uses rotoscoping techniques to depict athletes in dynamic sports scenes, reflecting Serafimova's childhood admiration for Olympic athletes. The film aims to recreate the excitement and energy associated with the event, providing a sense of joy and positive energy during uncertain times. The project was inspired by the anticipation of the 2022 Winter Olympics and the desire to bring back the communal spirit of sports.
7. <https://directorsnotes.com/2019/07/31/serafima-serafimova-flawed/> - Directors Notes presents 'FLAWED', an animation by Serafima Serafimova that exposes women's self-perceived flaws to collective recognition. The film addresses concerns about body image and societal ideals, inspired by Serafimova's personal experiences. The project was a ten-month endeavor, created during evenings and weekends, highlighting the dedication and passion involved in bringing the animation to life. 'FLAWED' aims to shed light on the pressures women face regarding their bodies, encouraging a broader conversation about self-perception and societal standards.