

A clay sculpture of a white dog, possibly a Chihuahua, is the central focus. The dog is standing on its hind legs, wearing a light blue dress with a small, repeating pattern. It holds a string of small, round, light-brown beads in its right front paw. The dog's face is white with dark, expressive eyes and a black nose. The background is dark and textured, resembling a cave or a forest at night. The title 'THE ITCHING' is written in a stylized, red, dotted font across the middle of the image.

# THE ITCHING



A Film by Dianne Bellino + Adam Davies  
Written + Directed by Dianne Bellino  
Animated by Adam Davies  
Running Time: 15 mins.  
Film Contact: [diannebellino@gmail.com](mailto:diannebellino@gmail.com)







# Synopsis



### **Short Synopsis:**

In this handmade collaboration, a shy wolf tries to befriend a group of hip, party-loving bunnies but finds her body is in revolt.

### **Long Synopsis:**

*The Itching* is a 2016 clay animation film short, written and directed by Dianne Bellino and animated by Adam Davies.

The film follows a shy wolf who attends a dance party thrown by a group of hip, freewheeling bunnies. Though the wolf longs to connect with the exotic strangers, anxiety overwhelms her, and she descends into obsessive itching.

An intensely visceral film, warm-hearted and disturbing, *The Itching* investigates our primal longing for connection and reveals the vulnerability, anxiety, and ambivalence embedded there.





Film Notes



*The Itching* has picture primarily made by two people, Dianne Bellino and Adam Davies. Though we had different roles (Dianne is the writer and director; Adam is the animator), we also shared many aspects of production (we collaboratively designed and built the sets, for example). The process was fluid and organic and took seven years.

### **Collaboration:**

In the beginning *The Itching* was a small idea for a five-minute film that would take just a few months to make (of course). But because we worked in a research-oriented open-ended process, the small idea grew, from Brooklyn to Portland to Providence, RI. We worked in our friends' and families' basements, during nights and weekends, and on holiday breaks from our jobs. At times, it was difficult to keep the dream of the film alive, as our own lives and personal situations changed shape and direction. We struggled with things all filmmakers struggle with (time and money), as well as things particular to an independent clay animation project (how to get the characters' arms to fix in position when just a piece of thin wire holds them up; how to mix the standardized clay colors in a pot on the stove to get the colors we preferred). As we sat side by side in a cold apartment at a folding table endlessly making trees with aluminum foil, things always seemed both hilarious and scary and precarious—energy that went into the film.

### **Story and Theme:**

#### **Director's Notes:**

The first script for *The Itching* was very close to the final film, only longer and with a darker, more involved climax. As we made the film, I (Dianne) rewrote the script several times in order to simplify it. During rewriting, I tried to hold on to what seemed to be the emotional core of the movie: the wolf's anxiety and vulnerability, and her relationship to her own vulnerability. The shy wolf tries to connect with the extroverted bunnies and is unable to. Why? Why is she afraid of this connection, and why does it manifest in her / on her body? How much of this trouble is in the wolf's mind and how much is in her body? Working in clay and with animal figures allowed for a deep physical investigation into primal fears and emotions while still retaining humor, lightness, and mystery. Expressing the characters' interior lives as well as maintaining an evocative, hybrid tone was the guiding light for all visualization and decision-making.

Adam and my shared filmic references were Roman Polanski movies (*Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Tenant*), Jack Nicholson's performance in *The Shining*, and a Swedish video artist and stop-motion animator named Nathalie Djurberg. All of these movies display strange, unsettling emotion, which was our goal, too.



### **Animator's Notes:**

At a certain point, I realized that my working relationship with Dianne was a lot like director and actor, due to the depth to which we discussed all the character's backstories, interior worlds, and motivations. In the beginning, we needed to invent a sort of language on the faces of our characters: one that let them communicate clearly with each other as well as one that was more idiosyncratic and subjective. As production moved along, our focus shifted from animation techniques to acting techniques. Influenced heavily by Dianne's live action background, we developed a sort of ritual of acting and writing exercises to get me into character before animating, and we looked at the animal 'performances' together afterwards (and though it's painful in the world of animation to do more than one take, we often did).

### **Production:**

After the first few years of working on *The Itching* in an itinerant fashion, we realized that in order to finish, we needed a dedicated studio space. To our delight, we received a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, and also raised other funding, which we used to rent a studio in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Having a studio enabled a more efficient shooting process, but it was still very labor-intensive. Sometimes our friends came by for a few days to help, and it was always nice to have the company and the reality check. The bulk of the movie was shot in this studio over two years.

We wrapped production in October 2014 and Adam flew on a plane to start a new life in San Diego literally that same evening. Still living in New York, Dianne edited, and sought out post-production collaborators. Nancy Kwon, a dear friend and designer, handmade *The Itching* titles. Dean Parker, a talented composer, deeply committed himself to making music for the film. And Eli Cohn, a Brooklyn-based sound designer and mixer, defined and deepened the emotional beats of the film in all the right ways.

We're so excited to be able to premiere *The Itching* at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival (a first for us both)! If this was a movie, Sundance might seem like too happy an ending, but we'll take it.





Bios



**Dianne Bellino**  
**(Writer • Director)**

Dianne Bellino is a writer/director of narrative and experimental forms in both live action and animation. Previous films have screened at SXSW, Ann Arbor, RISD Museum, Netflix and Fandor, and are available on DVD through The Journal of Short Film and Drag City. Her work has been supported by grants from NYSCA and the Boomerang Fund for the Arts, and residencies at the MacDowell Colony and Yaddo. Bellino teaches filmmaking and is Assistant Dean of the School of Art at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn.

**Adam Davies**  
**(Animator)**

Adam Davies is an artist and stop-motion animator who has worked at studios in Portland, OR and Brooklyn, NY on commercials for clients such as MTV, Nickelodeon, Burger King, and Heineken. He received his B.F.A. from Pratt Institute and currently teaches filmmaking through the Media Teaching Lab at the University of California in San Diego.

**Dean Parker**  
**(Composer)**

Composer Dean Parker's first professional performance was at The Royal Inn, N.S.W. Australia in a three piece rock band. In New York City Dean Parker has composed music for PBS, HBO, BRAVO and the IFC as well as for several indie feature films. He has assisted film composer Carter Burwell on many feature films including Being John Malkovich, Before Night Falls, Oh Brother Where Art Thou, Twilight, Carol and Mr. Homes. Dean Parker is a graduate of Newcastle University, Australia and currently lives in Bronx, NYC.

**Eli Cohn**  
**(Sound Designer + Mixer)**

Eli Cohn is a Brooklyn based sound designer and re-recording mixer. Over the last decade he has collaborated with many of independent film's leading voices. Recent work includes Maris Curran's Five Nights in Maine, Tim Sutton's Dark Night, and Andrew Neel's Goat.





Credits



Writer  
Director  
Editor  
Cinematography + Lighting  
Animal Design + Construction  
Dianne Bellino  
  
Animator  
Assistant Editor  
Assistant Camera  
Prop Design + Construction  
Armatures  
Adam Davies  
  
Production Design  
Set Construction  
Art Direction  
Animal Resculpting  
Dianne Bellino + Adam Davies

Costume Design + Construction  
Antonia Ford-Roberts + Dianne Bellino

Costume Assistance + Sewing  
McLean Sheperd  
Kimi Kaplowitz  
Jen Prokopowicz

Music  
Dean Parker

Sound Design + Mix  
Eli Cohn

Sound Editor  
Daniel D'Errico

Additional Visual Effects  
Alec Iselin

Colorist  
Chris Ramey

Title Design  
Nancy Kwon

Production Consultants  
Reuben Kleiner  
Zack Williams

Post Production Consultants  
Richie Sherman  
Kalika Kharkar Sharma  
Jeremy Brooke

Post Production Effects  
Adam Davies







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