

LA WEEKLY

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**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH L.A.
ARTIST ALLISON SCHULNIK ABOUT HER
NEW CLAYMATION VIDEO FOR GRIZZLY
BEAR**



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Allison Schulnik is an L.A.-based artist known primarily for her self-described "goopy" oil paintings of clowns or hoboos or vaguely yeti-like creatures. They're kind of multi-colored Bondo meets the nether-spiritworld. But Schulnik, who was one of the artists in the *Weekly's* "Some Paintings" show a couple of years back, is an animator and filmmaker, too. Her latest project is an arresting, beautiful, lovingly weird video for the Brooklyn-based band Grizzly Bear, "Ready, Able."

Schulnik comes from an arty San Diego family (mom, aunt, uncle are painters; dad is an architect; cousin a cartoonist) and studied claymation in the experimental animation program under Jules Engel at CalArts. Following graduation she worked for several years for commercial animation studios, waiting for a fine art break; she kept painting. The break came with a call from Black Dragon Society, and then New York's Bellwether Gallery, before she "settled with" Mark Moore Gallery in 2007.

"I was selling the whole time. But I still wasn't convinced it was really a possibility to be an artist and make enough to not have to work also, because really it's not a 'career' and shouldn't be. I didn't want to have to make money from my art making, so I waited to quit until it seemed I could. I'm all about not gaining any responsibilities like house, nice car, children, etc., so when the shit hits the fan, which seems to happen to most young artists, I'll be ready - all saved up."

A couple of years ago, Schulnik made a short film called *Hobo Clown*, for which she hoped to use a song by the Brooklyn-based band Grizzly Bear. She sent the film to the band, who loved it, said yes to her using their song, then asked if she would make their next video. Schulnik already had an idea for a new film in the works, and when she heard their new song, "Ready, Able," it seemed a good fit. Three or four months later, after gathering natural materials from the woods around Big Bear to create the set, and other set-stuff from the railroad tracks around her studio, and making endless, time-consuming changes to her clay...

"Animation is 24 frames a second," she tells me. "I was working on what animators call one's and two's. So I actually did an average of about 18 frames/second. I think I animated about 8 minutes, cut it down to 4:30. So I sculpted around 9,000 frames."

"It was tough. I decided to have a lake, which was made from hair gel. I had to sculpt it along with everything else for every frame. It added a lot of back pain into the mix.

"I work relatively fast. But I think I probably did 12-hour days, 7 days a week, for a good 9 weeks straight. That's just the animation part.

"You go into this zone, there's nothing like it. You're in a little black room all by yourself (although I had the lighting wiz/genius and friend Helder King Sun, who is an amazing filmmaker in his own right, come in a few times a week and create the lighting for the set.) But besides that you are alone in the dark for hours and hours in this little mini-world that you created and have complete control over. It's complete escapism. I love it. And when you see the result, it's magic."

No argument here. "Ready, Able" the video is arresting, beautiful, lovingly weird. See for yourself.