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Visual Effects Society Announces its 2023 Board of Directors Officers

Los Angeles (January 18, 2023) – Today, the Visual Effects Society (VES), the industry’s global professional honorary society, announced its 2023 Board of Directors Officers. The Officers, who comprise the VES Board Executive Committee, were elected at the January 2023 Board meeting. The Officers include Lisa Cooke, who was re-elected Board Chair, and is the first woman to hold this role since the Society’s inception.

“It is my privilege to continue to Chair this global society of outstanding artists and innovators,” said VES Chair Lisa Cooke. “The esteemed leadership on our Board bring passion, diverse experience and enormous commitment to volunteer service to our organization. I’m excited about what we can achieve, working together, to grow the Society and take our worldwide membership to new heights.”

"The Society is so fortunate to have this year's Executive Committee members guiding our mission-driven work," said VES Executive Director Nancy Ward. "Individually, they've each devoted countless hours in service to VES, and together, they have a deep understanding of the organization and an unwavering commitment to serve the membership. I look forward to working with this year's Executive Committee to evolve the Society."

The 2023 Officers of the VES Board of Directors are:

- Chair: **Lisa Cooke**
- 1st Vice Chair: **Susan O’Neal**
- 2nd Vice Chair: **David H. Tanaka, VES**
- Secretary: **Rita Cahill**
- Treasurer: **Jeffrey A. Okun, VES**

Lisa Cooke, Chair

A VFX Producer at Tippett Studio and an Executive Producer at Tippett Productions, Cooke brings her experience as an animation/VFX producer, story consultant, screenwriter and actor. Firmly believing that effective science communication is vital to our world, before joining Tippett, she founded Green Ray Media, where she produced animation and VFX to create scientific, medical and environmental media for a broad audience.

In the past, Cooke has worked for entertainment clients including Lucasfilm, Fox, Universal and Nickelodeon Films, and in the VFX and animation industry for companies like Pixar, Glasgow-based Digital Animations Group, and as Senior Producer at Reardon Studios.

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Cooke served six years on the VES Bay Area Board of Managers Executive Committee before joining the VES Board of Directors, where she has served as Second Vice Chair, First Vice Chair, Co-Chair of the Archives Initiative and is honored to be currently serving her third term as Chair.

Susan O'Neal, 1st Vice Chair

Susan O'Neal joined the VES in the late 1990s and has served as a member of its global Board of Directors in multiple roles, including service on the Executive Committee in 2016 as Treasurer, and as 2nd Vice Chair in 2022. For many years, she served as the Chair for the legacy global Education Committee and currently co-chairs the Membership Committee. She has been instrumental in the work to grow the Society by leading the bi-annual membership review and approval process.

In 2019, O'Neal was honored with the VES Founders Award for meritorious service to the Society.

O'Neal is currently a recruiter for BLT Recruiting, Inc and has worked as an Operations Manager at The Mill, Operations Director at Escape Studios in Los Angeles, and as an Account Manager at Side Effects Software, Inc. She started her career in visual effects at Digital Domain in 1993, where she worked in finance and operations before turning to production.

David H. Tanaka, VES, 2nd Vice Chair

David H. Tanaka, VES is an Editor, Producer and Creative Director with experience ranging from visual effects and animation, to documentary and live action feature filmmaking. For 15 years he served at Industrial Light & Magic in VFX Production and VFX Editorial on films including *Jurassic Park*, *Forrest Gump* and the *Star Wars* saga. He then went on to Pixar Animation Studios as a Special Projects Editor for 10 years, contributing to such productions as *Cars*, *Ratatouille*, *WALL•E*, *Up*, *Toy Story 3* and *Monsters University*.

Tanaka currently holds a staff VFX Editor position with Tippett Studio and serves as Adjunct Professor for the Academy of Art University, San Francisco, specializing in producing and editing for animation and visual effects production. In 2020, he along with his wife, Dorianne, co-founded Cinemabilities[®] - a remote filmmaking course for typically and atypically developing students, ages 10 to 20.

David H. Tanaka has served three terms as Chair of the VES Bay Area Section, as well as 2nd Vice Chair on the global Board of Directors in 2021. He is a major contributor to the VES Archives, Awards, Outreach, and Work From Home Committees, and in 2022 was honored with both VES Lifetime Member and VES Fellow distinctions.

Rita Cahill, Secretary

Rita Cahill is an international business and marketing/PR consultant and has worked with a number of US, Canadian, UK, EU and Chinese companies for visual effects and animation projects. Current and former clients include companies in the feature film, television, VR and game industries, as well as government and educational entities. She is also a partner in MakeBelieve Entertainment, a film development company and serves as Executive Producer on a number of international projects.

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Previously, Cahill was the VP of Marketing for Cinesite where she oversaw the marketing of four divisions of the pioneering digital studio's services. Prior to Cinesite, Cahill was a founding Board member of the Mill Valley Film Festival/California Film Institute and remains on the Institute's Emeritus Board of Directors. Cahill was also the Founding Consultant on the formation and establishment of the Singapore International Film Festival.

This is Cahill's eighth term as Secretary. She also served as Chair or Co-Chair of the VES Summit for eight years. In 2021, Cahill was honored with the VES Lifetime Member distinction and the VES Founders Award.

Jeffrey A. Okun, VES, Treasurer

Jeffrey A. Okun, VES, is known for creating 'organic' and invisible effects, as well as spectacular 'tent-pole' visual effects that blend seamlessly into the storytelling aspect of the project. Okun has delivered wide-ranging effects in award winning films such as *The Last Samurai*, *Alpha*, *Blood Diamond*, *Stargate*, *Sphere*, *Red Planet*, *Deep Blue Sea*, and *The Last Starfighter* and acclaimed television programs such as *Cosmos: Possible Worlds* for National Geographic and Fox TV, *The End Is Nye* (NBC Universal) and *The Good Lord Bird* (Showtime).

Okun is a VES Fellow and recipient of the VES Founders Award. He created and co-edited, the *VES HANDBOOK OF VISUAL EFFECTS*, an award-winning reference book covering all aspects of creating visual effects, techniques and practices. He is currently co-editing the *VES HANDBOOK OF VIRTUAL PRODUCTION*, a complete guide to Virtual production from uses, roles, techniques and best practices, due out in Summer 2023. He created the VES Awards and continues to produce the event for the 21st year.

As VES Board Chair for seven years, Okun fostered a global community, focused attention on bringing business and creative education to artists, facilities and studios and guided the Society to help create a worldwide software anti-pirating alliance with the US Government to ensure that all facilities have a fair and level playing field from which to bid. He also served as Chair of the Los Angeles Section of the VES for two years and has been a Board member on both the VES and the L.A. Section for many years.

About the Visual Effects Society

The Visual Effects Society is a professional global honorary society dedicated to advancing the arts, sciences and applications of visual effects and to upholding the highest standards and procedures for the visual effects profession. It is the entertainment industry's only official organization representing the extended global community of visual effects practitioners, including supervisors, artists, producers, technology developers, educators and studio executives. VES' nearly 4,500 members in 45 countries worldwide contribute to all areas of entertainment – film, television, commercials, animation, music videos, games and new media. To learn more about the VES, visit www.vesglobal.org and follow us on Twitter @VFX Society. Read our award-winning signature publication *VFX Voice* at www.vfxvoice.com.