

Active Octopus and Ringling Film Secure Major Industry Awards

The Sarasota agency's narrative campaign, [The Ringling Ghost](#), earned Best of Show at the EduAdAwards alongside Gold Muse and AVA honors.

SARASOTA, FL, UNITED STATES, April 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Active Octopus](#),

a Sarasota-based brand strategy and creative agency, has secured a significant series of international and national awards for its innovative campaign, [The Ringling Ghost](#). Developed for the film department at Ringling College of Art and Design, the project recently earned major honors at the Vega Digital Awards, the Educational Advertising Awards, the Muse Creative Awards, and the AVA Digital Awards.



A still from the award-winning campaign [The Ringling Ghost](#) featuring the mysterious silhouette of Ewan Gillies.

The campaign's most recent success at the 2026 Vega Digital Awards highlights the agency's strategic approach to digital rollout. Active Octopus secured a Gold Vega Award for Integrated Digital Marketing, recognizing the comprehensive launch of the Ringling Film YouTube platform with [The Ringling Ghost](#) as its anchor content. The agency also received a Silver Vega Award for Digital Marketing in the Schools and Universities category.

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Matt Gissing, Creative Director

"This project was designed to prove that a strategic, story-first approach can build a self-sustaining digital ecosystem," said Matt Gissing, Founder and Creative Director of Active Octopus. "Winning for an integrated campaign validates our 'Humanize to Compel' methodology. By focusing on narrative precision rather than traditional marketing noise, we were able to launch an entire platform that continues to engage its audience."

At the 41st Annual Educational Advertising Awards, the largest competition of its kind in the

country, the initiative earned the prestigious Best of Show distinction. Out of over 2,000 entries from more than 1,000 institutions, the campaign was one of only 17 elevated to this highest tier. Additionally, the agency secured multiple Gold and Silver honors at the 2026 Muse Creative Awards for Video Entertainment and Branded Content Recruitment, following an earlier Gold AVA Digital Award.

By expanding an existing campus myth into a comprehensive narrative architecture, the campaign bypassed traditional recruitment advertising to create a lasting brand repositioning device. Working within the higher education environment, Active Octopus utilized a professional agency model where students were integrated as active collaborators. Under Gissing's creative direction, students earned real-world credits and experience on a project fueled by genuine creative buy-in. To date, the anchor film has generated over 26,000 views and served as the launchpad for Ringling Film's new digital presence.

"Organizations succeed when they replace conventional marketing noise with narrative precision," Gissing added. "By treating this project as a premium entertainment property rather than a standard institutional deliverable, we created a strategic awareness engine that resonates far beyond the campus."

The success of The Ringling Ghost highlights the impact of narrative-driven marketing and the unique creative capabilities found within the Sarasota arts and education community.

About Active Octopus:

Based in Sarasota, Florida, Active Octopus is a brand strategy and creative agency that partners with higher education institutions, enterprise organizations, and visionary founders. The agency specializes in clarifying brand positioning and executing narrative campaigns that command attention by anchoring messaging in human truth.

About Matt Gissing:

Matt Gissing is the Founder and Creative Director of Active Octopus and serves as the Creative Operations Manager and a faculty member in the film department at Ringling College of Art and Design. He is the developer of the "Humanize to Compel" framework for narrative-driven marketing.

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