

## **October 2024 – Advisory meeting**

Members:

- Jorge Gutierrez - Animation Director
- Carol Ashley – CS Fullerton Dep director
- Bijan - Cinema without Borders, president
- Brooke Keesling -Head of recruitment at Bento Box
- Leslie Ezeh - Legends Animated and Director of Operations at ASIFA Hollywood
- Darnell Williams – CEO, Elektrashock real time entertainment technologies
- StJohn Colon - Game developer - USC professor
- Michael Bonitatis- Cal State Long Beach Lecturer, Animation Libation Studios Director
- Beau Janzen - VFX Education Lead at Gnomon

### **1. What trends are you seeing in hiring for artists in VFX, Game and Animation?**

- a. Studios increasingly seek artists with skills in real-time rendering (Unity, Unreal Engine) due to their applications in virtual production and immersive media. This trend is growing alongside traditional 3D and visual effects skills, as productions leverage virtual tools to streamline pipelines and cut costs.
- b. Animation and VFX professionals are in high demand for game-related roles. Notably, companies like Netflix are hiring senior producers with experience in outsourcing and multi-platform art production, reflecting a growing focus on immersive gaming experiences. The demand for technical artists, UI/UX designers, and specialists in interactive media continues to rise as studios expand into interactive projects.
- c. Many roles are now offered as remote or hybrid positions, providing flexibility to artists and broadening candidate pools. This shift is partly in response to budgetary constraints and layoffs that hit major studios like Riot Games, Sony Interactive Entertainment, and Pixar earlier in 2024. Freelance and short-term contracts are becoming more common.
- d. Layoffs across companies like Disney, EA, and Unity have created a competitive market for available roles. There are production positions that start with being a PA and lead up to Line Producer and Producer spots - those positions require strong organizational skills and knowledge of animation production. We also hire Editors - people who can't draw or aren't artists but

have strong timing and editorial skills, so that's something for them to think about. every studio also has an operations team, legal and business affairs people who work with the contracts, accountants who work on the corporate or production sides of things. There are many positions in every studio that don't involve artistic ability. Regardless, animation studios still look for strong visual storytelling skills and the ability to design in a variety of styles in both 2D and 3D spaces.

- e. There is a strong interest in finding work outside of the major studio system and scaling up independent animation production. This is why Legends Animated is committed to helping creators form [worker cooperatives](#) in order to better secure work collectively, as well as create original content while maintaining IP ownership

Conclusion:

Artists in VFX, gaming, and animation benefit from expanding their skillsets into real-time rendering, exploring hybrid contract opportunities, and focusing on game-oriented roles. This adaptability aligns well with the current hiring landscape in Los Angeles.

## **2. How should we approach portfolio work that is relevant to 4-year institutions and advanced programs?**

- a. A structured approach to portfolio creation can focus on skill demonstration, project diversity, and professional presentation while focusing on the fundamentals of design and animation and making sure that the graduates are able to be strong drafts people and visual storytellers. As usual a strong portfolio should show:
- b. Combination of both strong foundational skills and specialized tracks
- c. Focus on quality vs quantity
- d. Show both individual and collaborative projects
- e. Ensure that students understand how to structure, organize and present their portfolios
- f. Utilize programs like BRIC Digital  
Badges: <https://www.bricfoundation.org/digital-badges>

## **3. What is the software pipeline needed in VFX? IS it still the same?**

- a. The following link is a great reference for indie creators to use: <https://github.com/cgwire/awesome-cg-vfx-pipeline?tab=readme-ov-file#digital-content-creation-software-dccs>

- b. Even though there is a surge in the development and implementation of AI tools, many of them are yet to be incorporated into the VFX pipelines. The pipeline used in most productions is still the same, but it is crucial to prepare for these new tools coming our way. While AI introduces many efficiencies, it's also essential to approach it as a tool that enhances artists' capabilities rather than a replacement. Human creativity, storytelling, and aesthetic judgment remain central to the VFX and animation process, with AI as a powerful support tool for repetitive tasks and technical improvements.

**4. What other jobs are relevant for emerging students that may not be centered on being an artist? Starting with PA positions etc.....**

- a. There are production positions that start with being a PA and lead up to Line Producer and Producer spots - those positions require strong organizational skills and knowledge of animation production. We also hire Editors - people who can't draw or aren't artists but have strong timing and editorial skills, so that's something for them to think about. This might be too outside of the box, but our studio and every studio also has an operations team, legal and business affairs people who work with the contracts, accountants who work on the corporate or production sides of things. There are many positions in every studio that don't involve artistic ability, so I hope that's encouraging to all of your students!
- b. In addition to production roles (production assistant, production coordinator, etc), there are other jobs in social media/ marketing, casting, PR, sound design, etc
- c. Other technical jobs such as technical director (Disney just sent a call for Technical Directors internships for next year), Technical developers, engineers, data and render wranglers and media managers, UX/UI designers
- d. Project managers and quality assurance testers