Aaron Aikman Lead Technical Artist, Graphics

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Experience

Blizzard Entertainment Lead Technical Artist, Graphics (Oct 2022-Present)
Senior Technical Artist II (Sep 2021-Oct 2022) |Senior Technical Artist (Sep 2018-Sep 2021)
- Creating tools, shaders, and solutions for artists
- Interfacing with artists and engineers to improve game features and performance
- Empowering artists by providing graphics knowledge, tooling options, and general troubleshooting
- Amplifying the work of my team and creating a supportive work environment with high growth potential
- Anticipating future roadblocks and needs for my team and other disciplines
- Driving initiatives and creating systems of support for content and engineering teams

ELVTR Instructor (Dec 2023 – Present)
- Teaching an Introduction to Technical Art class
- Covering Python, UI for tools, Unreal Engine 5, Nanite, Lumen, blueprints, shaders, VFX, rendering, game performance, building your portfolio, problem-solving, and more

The Mentor Coalition Shader/Tech Art Mentor (Sep 2021-Present)
- Mentoring current and prospective tech artists in shaders, rendering, problem-solving and more

Blind Squirrel Games Senior Technical Artist (Oct 2017-Sep 2018)
- Created shaders for characters, environments, and VFX
- Made filters for Substance Painter to improve Character artist workflow
- Rigged characters and props
- Created character skill and ambient visual effects
- Set up anim blueprints and in-engine rig solutions in Unreal Engine 4
- Created post process materials for screen space effects
- Profiled and improved performance
- Developed tools for improved animation workflow
- Provided troubleshooting support for art team and engine-specific knowledge for engineering
- Wrote documentation for art pipelines

HALON Entertainment Engine Technical Artist (Aug 2015-Sep 2017)
- Established art pipeline for asset creation, shot assembly, lighting, effects and rendering in Unreal
- Trained team on real-time engine workflow and best practices
- Wrote extensive documentation for training and troubleshooting
- Managed project structure and optimization as pertaining to Unreal
- Created material inheritance system and templates for visual quality and efficiency
- Developed tools in the engine to aid and expedite the creative process
- Managed engine troubleshooting challenges across the company
- Created visual effects including particles, clothing, and destruction for Previs and Postvis
- Performed motion tracking of cameras and actors for Postvis
- Integrated motion capture and animation for shot creation
- Developed tools to aid, manage, and export animation as well as tools for file management

Flatter Than Earth 3D and Technical Artist (Sep 2014-Jul 2015)
- Established character and environment art pipeline
- Created hero characters
- Created props and modular environment kits
- Managed scene assembly and worldbuilding
- Authored VFX and shaders
- Optimized assets and improved in-engine bottlenecks
- Developed art tools and workflows to speed up production

Education

Academy of Art University San Francisco, CA (2009-2013), Bachelor of Fine Arts in Game Development

Software

3D	Maya, Houdini, ZBrush
Surfacing	Substance 3D Designer, Substance 3D Painter
Game Engine	Unreal, Unity, Proprietary
Version Control	Git, Perforce
Profiling	PIX, RenderDoc, Proprietary
Other	Photoshop, Qt Designer, Excel, Jenkins, Jira

Skills

Art	Modeling, Sculpting, Retopology, Unwrapping, Texturing, Lighting, VFX
Tech	Shaders, Perf, Art/Anim Pipeline, Version Control, Job Distribution, Automation
Code	Python, Qt, C#, HLSL, GLSL, Blueprint, Batch, AutoHotkey
Soft	Communication, Coordination, Documentation, Training, Pathfinding

Capabilities

- Implementing advanced shaders and rendering techniques
- Paving the way for artists and directors through look development
- Driving cross-team initiatives through planning and building lines of communication
- Documenting and improving art processes
- Evaluating low-level rendering and optimizing performance
- Mentoring and promoting individual growth
- Force multiplying through organizing production schedules and skill facilitation
- Building and maintaining efficient art pipelines
- Problem-solving and providing expert support for artists and engineers
- Understanding advanced modeling, sculpting, texturing, lighting, and cinematic workflows
- Understanding fundamental rigging, simulation, automation, animation, and VFX pipelines
- Prioritizing development and gameplay experiences

Contributions

Games

- Diablo IV: tools, shading, performance, and more
- Warcraft 3: shaders
- Relumine: shaders, VFX, performance
- Drifters: tools, shading, rigging, and VFX
- Marvel Avengers: VFX
- Borderlands: Game of the Year Enhanced: shading and tool support
- XCOM 2: War of the Chosen: lighting and VFX for in-game cinematics
- Paladins: VFX and lighting for trailer
- Puppet Quest: character art, env art, VFX, lighting, performance, tools, and rigging
- 3 Unannounced Titles

Movies

- War for the Planet of the Apes: tools, shaders, VFX, rendering, lighting, dynamics for previs and postvis
- Call of the Wild: character art, rigging, tools, shading, VFX, and rendering for previs

- Logan: tools and comping for previs
- X-Men: Dark Phoenix: environment art for previs
- The MEG: tools, shading, and rendering support for previs
- Feral: tools, VFX, shading, lighting, and rendering for previs
- 2 Unannounced Titles

TV
- The Orville: tools, animation, modeling, lighting, rendering, and VFX for previs

Amusement Park Rides
- Star Wars: Millennium Falcon – Smugglers Run at Disneyland: tools support
- Mass Effect: New Earth at Great America: lighting, rendering, and VFX

Auxiliary Experience

Game Developers Conference (2024)
> Presented "H2O in H3LL: The Various Forms of Water in Diablo IV" talk on water shaders

Featured Academy of Art Game Development Story (2021)
> Spoke about career journey and the skills necessary to succeed

Guest Speaker for Loyola Marymount University Tech Art Class (2020)
> Spoke to students about tech art as a career and valuable tools for the job

Vital Link Featured Panelist (2020)
> Spoke to students from Saddleback NEXT Academy about industry opportunities and trends
> Broke out into targeted session for teaching game industry technology and practices

Vital Link Featured Panelist (2020)
> Spoke to educators from across Orange County CA about industry opportunities and trends
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Vital Link Featured Panelist (2018)
> Spoke to educators from across Orange County CA about industry opportunities and trends
> Broke out into targeted session for teaching game industry technology and practices

Featured in Academy of Art Industry and Careers News (2017)
> Spoke about building a previs pipeline in Unreal Engine 4 on War for the Planet of the Apes

Academy of Art Spring Show Winner (2013)
> First Place for 3D Character Art