

## 3D Character Animation 2023

6<sup>th</sup> March to 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023, at The Animation Workshop, VIA University College  
Optional trip from 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> June

### Course program

Main program – onsite training		
Week 1	6 to 10 March	Introduction to Maya
Week 2	13 to 17 March	3D Animation Basics
Week 3	20 to 24 March	3D Animation Basics
Week 4	27 to 31 March	3D Animation Basics
Week 5	3 to 5 April	3D Animation Basics
Week 5/6	6 to 10 April	Easter break
Week 6	11 April	Self-study
Week 6	12 to 14 April	Acting workshop
Week 7	17 to 21 April	3D Animation Advanced – Acting
Week 8	24 to 28 April	3D Animation Advanced – Acting
Week 9	1 to 5 May	3D Animation Advanced – Dialogue
Week 10	8 to 12 May	3D Animation Advanced – Dialogue
Week 11	15 to 19 May	Final Project, group
Week 12	22 to 26 May	Final Project, group
Add on – online/hybrid		
Week 13	30 May to 2 June	Portfolio bootcamp - <b>Online</b> mentoring
Week 14	5 to 9 June	Portfolio bootcamp - <b>Online</b> mentoring
Week 15	12 to 18 June	<b>Trip:</b> Annecy International Animation Film Festival

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VIA University College

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## 3DCA 2023 program

### Summary

The 3DCA course takes the participants through a series of lectures, assignments and mini-productions of increasing complexity in the field of 3D character animation, from concept to polish. Under the supervision of guest teachers who are all animation professionals, the participants are introduced to the industry-standard Autodesk Maya modelling and animation software and to 3D character animation through a series of exercises designed to transfer the classical 2D animation principles onto a 3D platform. Focus will lie on the basic animation principles, body mechanics and physical action during basic training and then move on to the advanced concepts of pantomime acting and dialogue animation. The course culminates in a 2-week final project, a short animation, structured as a collaborative project. This will comprise each student's showreel masterpiece; with which they can apply for jobs as junior 3D character animators.

As an online add-on, participants benefit from a portfolio bootcamp with exactly this mind: how to maximize the participants' chances to get a job in the animation industry. Participants will be guided and mentored by industry experts in how to create an effective showreel and portfolio.

Finally, participants are encouraged and supported in attending the Annecy International Animation Film Festival in France in June. The festival and market is a great place to start showing the newly updated showreel, meeting animation studio executives and applying for jobs as junior 3D character animators.

### Modules

#### **Introduction to Maya – 1 week**

Teacher: Henrik Malmgren, SE. AV Generalist, CEO and founder of Good Job Studios.

The goal of the module is for the course participants to be introduced to and get familiar with the Maya user interface, basic settings, functions and tools, and go through the steps of the CG pipeline. The topic is intro to modelling *for animators*. Participants are introduced to simple polygon modelling and will learn how to create simple models using reference images, and texture, light, shade and render them out. Exercise example: Participants will model an exterior environment. Being an animation course, the modelling and texturing exercises are meant to give the participants an understanding of working in 3d space, and the software and the possibilities. The goal is NOT to have the participants model a character for animation, since they will be working with already modelled and rigged characters in the following weeks.

#### **3D Animation Basics – 3,5 weeks**

Teacher: Erik Schmidt, DK. Animation Supervisor at Sun Creature. Erik has worked for companies such as Ghost VFX, Warner Brothers, Walt Disney Animation Studios, and DreamWorks Animation. *Black Panther* (2018), *Legends of Chima* (TV series, 2014), *Otto the Rhino* (2013), *Bolt* (2008), *Shark Tale* (2004), *The Road to Eldorado* (2000).

The goal of the 4-week module is to familiarize participants with the Maya animation interface and work methods in a 3D animation software, while studying and applying the basic principles of animation through simple exercises. The teacher will take the



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participants through a long range of basic exercises during the 4 weeks, from bouncing balls, music exercises, to walk cycles, weight shift, and weight lift exercises designed to give participants as much hands-on animation experience as possible. At the end of the module, participants will have already created a lot of short animations in 3D, and should be more at ease with the technical side of 3D animation and Maya.

### **Acting Workshop – 3 days**

Expected teacher: Robert Bennett, USA. Acting teacher, director for animated films (Les Gobelins, The Animation Workshop, VIA UC, EMCA etc.)

This practical workshop is closely linked to the following Acting module. Before this workshop, participants are presented with an assignment to be completed during the 2-week Acting module. This assignment will be the starting point for the workshop. The content of the workshop will be warm up exercises, how to act for animation, getting comfortable acting for animation reference, getting (more) comfortable recording yourself, exploring the movements and acting of your characters, and developing your characters. The goal is for participants to create a unique character with a solid background story and characteristics. What will motivate the character to do what she does? How will the character react to what happens? A strong character will make it easier to come up with interesting ideas for the shots. Finally, participants shoot reference of themselves to use for the following module.

### **Easter holiday – 5 days**

No training activities are planned. However, participants have full access to classroom facilities during the break.

### **3D Animation Advanced – Acting – 2 weeks**

Teacher: Stine Agerskov Frandsen, DK. Animator at AVDesign. Credits include *Skylanders Academy* seasons 1-3 (2015-2018), *PJ Masks* season 2 (2017), *Raving Rabbids* season 1-2 (2013-2015), *Barbar* season 3 (2013).

The goal with the 2-week Acting module is for the participants to apply what they have learned during the basic weeks in a short shot. The participants focus on personality and originality in their characters. Attention is on the character's body gestures. The module is structured as a mini production, where the participants choose from 5 different scenarios without dialogue to solve a given assignment. Under the guidance of the teacher, participants then analyze, plan, block, spline and polish an animated shot in 3D with a biped character. The scenarios, props and character to be used will be provided, so the participants can focus on the animation. At the end of the module, participants will have finished a short (5-12 seconds) physical acting shot.

### **3D Animation Advanced – Dialogue – 2 weeks**

Teacher: Christoffer Andersen, DK. Freelance animator. Christoffer has worked for companies such as Illumination Mac Guff, DNEG, TeamTO, Sony Pictures Imageworks. Credits include *The Monkey King* (2023), *Hotel Transylvania 3: Summer Vacation* (2018), *Skylanders Academy*, season 1 & 2, *Barbar & The Adventures of Badou – Season 3*.

The 2-week Dialogue module is also a mini production, and similar in structure to the preceding Acting module. The goal for the participants is to learn and get hands-on experience doing facial animation, lip-sync, eyes, eye-darts, blinks etc. The steps are: Choose a short piece of dialogue (5 seconds), analyze, plan, shoot reference, block, animate and polish the animation under the guidance of the teacher. Focus is on lip-sync and facial animation, through a medium shot from the waist up. The teacher will bring a choice of 5 short pieces of dialogue for the



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participants to choose from. Alternatively, participants find 2-3 audio clips and the teacher helps select the most suited audio. The goal at the end of the module is for each participant to have a finished, short dialogue shot, with one character speaking. If there are two, one should be off-screen.

### **Final Project – 2 weeks**

Potential teacher: Fredrick Fassé, CAN. Animation Director at Doberman Pictures. LEGO Jurassic World: The Secret Exhibit (2018) Beat Bugs (TV Series, 2016), Ratchet & Clank (2016), Escape from Planet Earth (2013), Dead Rising 2 (video game, 2010).

CG assistance: Henrik Malmgren, SE.

The 2 final project weeks are another mini-production during which participants produce a 15-20 second shot. The final project is structured as a collaborative production. The module should be seen as a continuation of the previous modules, so participants can choose to focus on a dialogue piece again or concentrate on more physical, pantomime acting.

The stories for the final animations are based on the story beats 1. Character wants, 2. Obstacle, 3. Resolution. The groups will draw at random from a list of wants and obstacles, and will then have 1 day for story and storyboard. The idea is to get the story out of the way as quickly as possible, and then plan and begin to block the animation. Participants are encouraged to keep the story very simple, so they can spend as much time animating and polishing as possible. At the end of the module, participants should gain an understanding of the importance of polish and learn different techniques to polish in 3D animation. This module ends with a presentation, where the groups present their final project.

### **Portfolio Bootcamp – 2 weeks**

Potential teacher: Julie Astrup, DK. 3D animator at Copenhagen Bombay Productions.

As an online add-on, participants benefit from a Portfolio bootcamp: How to maximize the participants' chances to get a job in the animation industry. Participants will be guided and mentored by industry experts in how to create an effective showreel and portfolio. They can get feedback on previous exercises and tips to improve their material. It will be possible to create a new portfolio piece with supervision from the guest teacher.

### **OPTIONAL: Trip to The Annecy International Animation Film Festival**

The 3DCA course includes support in attending and student accreditation to The Annecy International Animation Film Festival. More info is available from the course organizer.



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## **Format of teaching**

We do not have any teachers on staff at The Animation Workshop, VIA University College. Instead, we bring in professional artists from studios to teach for a limited number of weeks. In general, the teacher will do lectures/demos in the mornings followed by exercises and project work in the afternoons. Hands-on sessions are accompanied by 1-on-1 feedback or dailies and weeklies with the whole group. The classroom is set up with a computer for each of the (up to) 16 participants, and a teacher computer hooked up to a projector, making it easy to switch between demos/lectures and hands-on work.

## **Course instructional method**

- Lectures, demonstrations, walk-throughs, hands-on work, workflow talks, exercises, with critique and advice.
- Dailies, weeklies and assignment presentations.
- All modules will include lectures and extensive hands-on experience. All rigs are provided for the exercises.

## **Class hours**

Normal class hours are 9:00 to 16:00.



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