
DEREK ROBINETTE

Technical Artist | Unity Specialist | Shaders | VFX | UI | Animation | Tools | Real-Time Pipelines

Indianapolis, IN

DerekAlanRobinette@gmail.com

www.DerekRobinette.com

Professional Summary

As a highly experienced Technical Artist with over 25 years in the video game industry, I am well-versed in all aspects and disciplines of game development. I specialize in rendering, DCC tools, feature implementation, and technical animation, bridging art and engineering to create and implement high-quality characters, VFX, UI, and cinematic content. I have extensive expertise in Unity, C#, shaders, and pipeline development, with proven success across dozens of AAA console, PC, mobile, and VR titles. Known for optimizing workflows and performance, mentoring teams, and delivering visually compelling assets while maintaining technical efficiency, I excel at solving complex production challenges and pushing the limits of game engines and hardware. I am currently independently architecting and building a Postgres-based AI infrastructure, applying a first-principles, systems-level approach to a new domain.

Unity Certified Expert Technical Artist: Shading & Effects 2018

Core Proficiencies

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pipeline Development• Tool / Feature Scripting• Shader Writing / Shadergraphs• Visual Effect Scripting• Rigging, Animation, and Cinematics | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UI and Asset Integration• Performance Optimization• Troubleshooting and Debugging• Creative Problem Solving and Architecture Design• Inter-Departmental Communication / Collaboration |
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Software and Languages

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unity• Perforce, SVN, Git• Autodesk 3ds Max• Adobe Photoshop• Autodesk Maya | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• C#• HLSL, CG• MAXScript• Python• MEL |
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Professional Experience

Zynga

2024 - 2026

Principal Technical Artist

As a Principal Technical Artist on Words With Friends, I specialized in connecting creative vision with technical execution by building features for new game modes and efficient tools, pipelines, and workflows that empowered the art team. I focused on solving complex production challenges, optimizing performance, and ensuring assets met both artistic goals and technical standards.

- Implemented complex assets and features in Unity C#, streamlining integration workflows and reducing overall development time.
- Produced high-quality UI and character animations in 3ds Max and Unity, improving visual clarity and enhancing user experience across multiple features.
- Profiled project performance and established art guidelines, reducing asset-related issues and ensuring consistent, optimized production standards.

WIMO Games

2021 - 2024

Principal Technical Artist

As a Principal Technical Artist, I was responsible for communicating between art and engineering teams and for developing optimized pipelines, tools, and workflows that empowered artists to elevated visual quality. I ensured technical consistency across projects while driving innovation, solving complex production challenges as the studio transitioned to VR, and improving overall performance.

- Created shaders and VFX/PostFX scripts across mobile and VR projects, improving visual fidelity and reducing rendering costs.
- Supported the transition to VR/XR and Unity URP, improving rendering efficiency and increasing overall project performance during runtime testing.
- Established optimized art guidelines, enabling faster asset creation and preventing costly rework.

KingsIsle Entertainment

2012 - 2021

Principal Technical Artist

As a Principal Technical Artist, I empowered the art team by developing tools, pipelines, and workflows that enabled artists to deliver and implement assets efficiently. I worked with the engineering team to design features for the studio's in-house suite of tools for their MMO projects.

- Implemented complex assets and features in Unity C#, streamlining integration workflows.
- Produced high-quality UI and character animations, enhancing visual clarity and improving user experience.
- Developed and maintained Max tools for artists, accelerating production speed and reducing workload.
- Served as the point of contact for troubleshooting issues in the Gamebryo engine and wrote tools to validate numerous known issues for assets on export.
- Profiled project performance on a wide variety of hardware and established art guidelines, reducing asset-related issues and ensuring consistent, optimized production quality.

Vigil Games

2008 - 2012

Senior Technical Artist

As a Senior Technical Artist, I connected art and engineering by creating tools, workflows, and optimizations that helped artists deliver high-quality assets efficiently. I specialized in solving complex production challenges, improving performance, and ensuring visual content met both artistic goals and technical requirements.

- Collaborated with engineering to design and implement character customization, animation state machines, and Havok-based vehicle systems, accelerating feature development and improving gameplay functionality across several core mechanics.
- Rigged complex characters, enabling smoother animation integration and reducing iteration time.
- Created optimized shaders and wrote and maintained custom Max tools, automating repetitive tasks.

XL Games

2005 - 2007

Technical Artist

As a Technical Artist, I worked directly with the engineering team to develop a proprietary engine, tools, pipelines, and workflows that enabled outsourced assets to be easily integrated. I focused on troubleshooting technical issues, and ensuring visual content met both creative and technical standards.

- Guided and implemented data formats across multiple projects, standardizing asset pipelines and reducing integration errors.
- Prototyped character, environment, VFX, and UI assets, accelerating early development workflows and enhancing visual quality for key features.
- Integrated outsourced production assets, ensuring consistency and compatibility while minimizing rework and saving significant production time.
- Supported multiple projects simultaneously, coordinating between teams to streamline pipelines and improve overall production efficiency.

Senior Artist: Characters, VFX, Technical Art

As a Senior Artist specializing in Characters, VFX, and Technical Art, I authored high-quality character models, visual effects, and UI assets while working with engineers to develop features for the studio's in-house engine.

- Modeled, textured, and rigged characters and vehicles, delivering high-quality assets that met artistic standards and integrated seamlessly into multiple game projects.
- Collaborated with engineering and design teams to solve technical challenges, successfully porting The Sims from 2D to 3D while maintaining gameplay fidelity and contributing to the game's design.
- Worked with engineering to develop systems for VFX, a 2D/3D hybrid UI for Pitfall, and custom shaders, enhancing visual quality and improving asset performance.
- Conducted research and development and applied creative problem solving, introducing innovative techniques that streamlined workflows and improved production efficiency.

Acclaim Studios Austin / Iguana Entertainment

1995 - 2000

Senior Artist, Lead Artist: Characters and Cinematics

As a Senior and Lead Artist for Characters and Cinematics, I oversaw the creation and direction of high-quality character models, animations, and cinematic sequences.

- Modeled, textured, rigged, and animated characters, delivering high-quality assets that enhanced in-game visuals and cinematic sequences.
- Developed a real-time cinematic editor in collaboration with engineering, streamlining cinematic creation and reducing production time for cutscenes.
- Provided on-site cinematic training at the UK studio, improving team proficiency and standardizing cinematic workflows across projects.
- Created custom texture baking pipelines for N64, optimizing memory usage while maintaining visual fidelity.

Games and Platforms

- **Mobile** (Android, iOS): Words With Friends, RPG Dice: Heroes of Whitestone, Animal Cove, Everclicker, Rise & Destroy, Fantasy Fighter Arena, Domsday Goonz, Gloom Busters, Multiple Solo Game Jam Projects
- **VR**: Micro Machines: Mini Challenge Mayhem (Quest 2/3), Battle Bows (Quest 2, SteamVR), Solo Game Jam Project (Quest 2)
- **PC**: Wizard101, Pirate101, Hero101, Warhammer 40k: Dark Millennium Online
- **Console**:
 - PS3/Xbox 360/Wii/PS2/PC: The Incredible Hulk
 - PS2/Xbox/NGC: Shark Tale, Pitfall: The Lost Expedition, The Sims, Over the Hedge (Additional Art), John Singleton's Fear & Respect
 - N64: Turok 2: Seeds of Evil, Turok 3: Shadow of Oblivion, Turok: Rage Wars (Additional Art), Shadowman (Additional Art)
 - Sega Arcade: Batman Forever