Ben Bays

benjamin.bays@austin.utexas.edu

Summary

Professional experience in classical animation, concept art, CGI, console game development, visual effects, handheld game development, VR/AR/XR/3D/?, comics, cartoons.

Faculty in the Department of Radio Television Film, Moody College of Communication, The University of Texas at Austin.
Lecturer in the School of Theater Dance and Film at Texas State University.

Director of the Karch Gaming Institute and the UT Academic Esports Team.
Principal faculty of the Digital Games Industries Program at UT.

Advisory board member and instructor UT Bridging Disciplines Program, Digital Arts and Media / Game Design and Development.
Advisory board member the International Research Center for Academic Esports and Game Technologies.

Education

Certificate in Filmmaking, Austin Film Works, 1990
Roadie for Jerry Jeff Walker, 1992
Austin High School 1992
Hermitage in Anandavadi, Kerala, India 1994
B.A. Studio Art (Illustration), College of Fine Arts, the University of Texas at Austin, 1998
Comics and Cartoons research visit Europe, 2023

Employment History

Faculty, Department of Radio Television and Film, Moody College of Communication, University of Texas at Austin 2008-present

- Teach up to 500 students a semester. Lead up to 7 TAs. Class formats include online, hybrid, terrestrial, lab, lecture, upper or lower division, as small as 12, as large as 120 in person, 250 online. Swift and deft with instructional design. Experiential. Software agnostic. Equitable. Flexible. Present
- Enhance learning experience by cross pollinating classes, creating events, collaborations, symposia, screenings, and exhibitions of student work. Access. Industry. Network.
- Subjects include:
    - **Business of Video Games**
    - **Esports**
    - **Game Usability Analysis**
    - **Comics and Cartoons** - practice, theory, history, technology, censorship, cultural spaces
    - **Video Game Development / Aesthetics** - engines, types of, theory and history, writing, audio, modeling, painting, animation, puzzles, narrative design, play
    - **Digital Media Production** introductory online asynchronous 250+ students course I have run every semester (summer too) since 2017
    - **Visual Effects** its components, dimensions and practice using modest tools up to Virtual Production and Ai
    - **CGI** for film, video games and everything else - modeling, surfacing, cameras and lighting, rendering and real time, rigging, skinning, walks, lip synch, theory and criticisms of, legacy of influences
    - **Animation** - real and digital, stop motion, drawn, character, effects, layout, storytelling, theory, history, enthusiasm for

—----------

    - *Courses outside my college*
    - **BDP 101: Exploring Digital Arts and Media** - foundational course for the Bridging Disciplines Program Digital Arts and Media Certificate program (non RTF majors)
    - **Enron Raptor Course** - in collaboration with the Department of Theater and Dance; Karen Maness and J.E. Johnston

- **Practical Special Effects** — Prototyping and Rapid Fabrication for Entertainment-in collaboration with The Department of Theater and Dance, The Cockerell School of Engineering and the Arts andEntertainment Technology Division of the College of Fine Arts

Lecturer in School of Theater Dance and Film, Texas State University 2021-
Joined the Department of Theater and Dance as a lecturer in their nascent film concentration a few years ago. Film concentration is a hit, becomes a major, the department gets renamed.

- **Instructor of Record**
  - **Visual Effects** - practice based discovery
    - Collaborate with TXST ALIAS Virtual Production Studio in Alkek One
  - **Film Directors Analysis** - seminar with film screenings

---

previously…

Faculty, Austin Community College 2010-2017

- *Adjunct Professor* in the Game Art Area, Game Development, Animation and Motion Graphics area for over 6 years (Northridge campus pre Highland)
- Instructional Design : developed templates, presentations, rubrics and curriculum for face to face and hybrid online courses in Game Art
- Industry Advisor for development of program/curriculum + participated in portfolio reviews even before teaching there
- **Instructor of Record**
  - 2D GAME ART
    - Sprites and GUI, 2D and 2.5D Platformers and texture projections, painting and Photo
  - 3D GAME ART
    - 3DS Max, Substance, Unity, Shaders, Dynamic/Baked Lighting, Optimizing LOD and collisions, instancing prefabs, effects and level Animations, image buffer post stack
  - 3D MODELING AND RENDERING I
  - 3D MODELING AND RENDERING II
  - 3D SURFACING AND LIGHTING

        - 3DS Max modeling, UV mapping, Shading and Texturing, Lighting, Camera, Reference, Rendering etc (no character animation)

In-World Composite Director *(of a Virtual World)* Videoranch 2009 - 2015

- Supervised on set + (proto) virtual production design compositing live audio and video broadcast into an online multiplayer virtual world
    - Oversaw creation and management of large scale virtual environments, models, textures, animation and associated digital assets
        - Live Events required custom models/textures/animations/links with same day turnaround, implemented in world in real time
    - In World Live Event coordinator
        - 20k+ concurrent international users SXSW 2012

Lead Artist *(at a video game studio)* **2006 – 2009**
Amaze Entertainment

- Lead artists through several games and prototypes based on both original and licensed IP.
- Active in the design and production of all visual assets of a videogame including splash screens and menus, maps, icons and GUI elements, particles, props, levels, characters and bosses, animation, box art, manual, merchandise, promotional images, advertising and just all around swag.
- Targeted and successfully delivered multiple titles for a variety of platforms including mobile, handheld and console.
- Experience budgeting, staffing, scheduling, outsourcing, research and development, pitch concept and bible development, marketing materials, QA database management, standards and localization.

Environment Artist *(for a video game studio)* **2006 – 2009**
Fizz Factor/F9

- Created dozens of levels, worlds and virtual environments for original and licensed IP for GBA (Game Boy Advance), Gameboy DS and Wii platforms
- Highlights include
    - Isometric and top down digital painted levels
    - 2.5D side scrollers
    - Tile based orthographic projections
    - Camera mapping
    - Pre-rendered then overpainted backgrounds
    - 3D levels with platforming (and flying!)
    - implementation of path based curvilinear layout and camera animation to

create 4.5D side scroller
    - utilizing novel stencil and buffer effects as artistic/gameplay element,
    - utilizing dual cameras: a perspective and an orthographic to clarify and enhance gameplay experience
    - conceiving and implementing system of rotating interchangeable tiles and developing image and camera projection techniques for use in mobile and handheld
- Reflection of my time in this role: developed flexibility adapting process and results across genres and styles from realistic to stylized to abstract. Design and art approach for audiences from children up to mature.

FX/Rotoscope/Animator/Artist *(on an animated feature film)* **2004 – 2005**
Detour Productions, Austin, TX
A Scanner Darkly.

- Directed by Richard Linklater adapted from a Philip K. Dick novel.
- Is **rotoscope** *animation* or is it a *special effect*? All I can tell you is I drew my arm off for one year with 50 of the most remarkable artists and animators in Texas.

- Experience delivering interpolated and frame-by-frame character animation animation using a sophisticated vector based painting / animation software.
- Collaborated directly with Bob Sabiston to alter/update proprietary animation software to **enhance modern rotoscoping technology** to include manual/optical tracking, corner pin distortions, Boolean intersections, shape morphing, spline based transformations.

Concept Artist/Environment Artist/Lead Environment Artist 2001 – 2004
Acclaim Studios

- Contributed a broad menu of game art for Gamecube, PS2, and XBOX
- **Concept art** for flora, props, environments, puzzles, arenas, vehicles, weapons, bosses, characters and creatures. Developed textural look, typefaces, alternate alphabets and iconography of several fictional game worlds. Assets used throughout production: for internal use, in-game, throughout the manual, box art and all promotional materials.
- Modeled, textured, lit, fx, on dozens of **environments** including but not limited to: tutorial levels, crypts, caves, platforming areas, shops, climbing levels, airlocks and elevator loads, boss fights, hidden rooms, reflection puzzles, arenas, ghost ships, waterfalls, tree top villages, desert ruins, alternate dimensions, dreamscapes, erupting volcanoes, busy casinos, burning warehouses, apartments, car, train and helicopter rides, urban rooftop and street level exteriors and destructible environments
- **Technical** - solved transparency, memory, camera and framerate woes that could

possibly happen during previous bullet point. I have personally resolved every bug and finished every level I have ever started. I will not give up. Organizing, renaming, reducing, topologizing, palletizing and compressing thousands of assets on multiple skus.

- Responsible for previsualization, layout, visual effects, rendering, compositing, editing and finishing of **cinematics** used in game. For promotional videos/trailers add accompanying titles, motion graphics and particles/visual flourishes.

Animation Department **2000 – 2001**
Swerve Pictures
Trip to Roswell. Dir. Geoff Marslett

- (Hybrid) animated feature included traditionally drawn animation, but CGI robots and vehicles, motion graphics and all sorts of weird *animation**.

Published Creative Work

Games and Interactive:

- Acclaim Studios. *Vexx.* Acclaim Entertainment, 2003. Xbox.
- Acclaim Studios. *Vexx.* Acclaim Entertainment, 2003. PS2.
- Acclaim Studios. *Vexx.* Acclaim Entertainment, 2003. Gamecube.
- Acclaim Studios. *100 Bullets*. Acclaim Entertainment/Unreleased, 2004. XBOX
- Amaze Entertainment, Inc. T*he Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning*. Sierra Entertainment, 2006. Nintendo DS.
- Amaze Entertainment, Inc. *The Legend of Spyro: Eternal Night.* Sierra Entertainment, 2007. Nintendo DS.
- Amaze Entertainment, Inc. *Over the Hedge: Hammy Goes Nu*ts! Activision Publishing, Inc., 2006. Nintendo DS.
- Amaze Entertainment, Inc. *Wizards of Waverly Place.* Unreleased, 2007. Nintendo DS.
- Amaze Entertainment, Inc. *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw.* THQ, 2007. Nintendo DS
- Amaze Entertainment, Inc. *The Incredible Hulk.* SEGA of America, Inc., 2008. Nintendo DS.
- Fizz Factor. *The Tale of Despereaux.* Atari, 2008. Nintendo DS.
- Fizz Factor. *Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian The Video Game.* Majesco Entertainment Company, 2009. Nintendo DS.
- Griptonite, Inc. *Assassin's Creed II: Discovery.* Ubisoft, Inc., 2009. Nintendo DS.
- Double Helix Games. *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra.* Electronic Arts, 2009. PSP.

- Trash Dance. *Trash dance Interactive Project.* Andrew Garrison, 2011. Installation/Kinect

Film:

- *A Scanner Darkly*. Dir. Richard Linklater. Perf. Keanu Reeves, Robert Downey, Jr., Woody Harrelson and Winona Ryder. Warner Independent Pictures, 2006.
- *Mars.* Dir. Geoff Marslett. Perf. Mark Duplass, Zoë Simpson Dean and Paul Gordon. Devolver Digital Films, 2013
- *Hard Reset*. Dir. Deepak Chetty. Perf. Oryan Landa, Josephine McAdam and Holt Boggs. 2016. DVD.
- *Middle Witch.* Dir. Amanda Gotera. Perf. Paulet Del Castillo, Alessandra Manon and Paeka Campos. 2015. DVD.
- *The 11th Order*. Dir. Joshua Defour. Perf. Michael Grant, Noah Gray-Cabey, Colin Hofmeister. 2019

Television and Web Series:.

- *The Ted Zone, Episode 1: The Butterfly Effect.* The Ted Zone. Dir and prod., Lance Myers. Adult Swim. 2007
- *The Ted Zone, Episode 2: People of Earth.* The Ted Zone. Dir and prod., Lance Myers. Adult Swim. 2007
- *The Ted Zone, Episode 3: The Belittling.* The Ted Zone. Dir and prod., Lance Myers. Adult Swim. 2007
- *The Ted Zone, Episode 6: Ted's Dead.* The Ted Zone. Dir and prod., Lance Myers. Adult Swim. 2007
- *I Exist.* Dir. Francesca Talenti. PBS
- *You Have my Deepest Sympathy.* Dir. Francesca Talenti. PBS
- *Life Jacket.* Dir. Francesca Talenti. PBS
- *On Writing Hat Poems*. Dir. Francesca Talenti. PBS

Independent and Freelance

- Independent **Animator** on a variety of feature and short films, interstitials, promos and commercials. Work shown on PBS, HBO, Univision, Adult Swim and available on a variety of online outlets and streaming services and over 25 festivals worldwide.
- **Title Sequence**, *Mars (feature film)*: designed, illustrated, digitized and animated pen and ink drawings for use in opening title sequence
    - Previously freelanced in motion graphics in Austin, working on wrestling federation intros and
- **CGI / Scientific Illustrator**, *Floodwise Communities*, 2021. CGI : modeled, lit, animated and rendered a mid sized gulf coast community under a variety of projected climate scenarios (sea level rise, failing infrastructure, extreme weather conditions)

    - Previously worked with geology consultancies, law firms and documentarians to render and present information in 2D and 3D/CGI forms
- **VR** - Art Gallery App, *Art Virtually*: CGI : modeled, surfaced and lit high end Virtual Art Gallery environment for virtualized marketplace for physical artworks (painting and sculpture). High end optical and photogrammetric capture throughput at luxury framerate and polish - (baked) lighting, fx work, camera and interactive VR for client. GUI elements. Consulted on design and manufacture of custom VR **hardware (slip your phone into)** to accompany app.
- **AR -** Artist and designer for a business joining image recognition (physical postcards) and Augmented Reality through Unity (Vuforia). Created **both** the *physical*, printed material and the accompanying *digital* Augmented Reality content (animated CGI models).

Engagements, Appearances and Events

- Jan 2026 Panel : Esports Innovation in Education UNSW
- Hosted 2025 Moody College Video Game and Esports Symposium
- Sept 2025, Guest Lecture in Business of Music by John Peyton
- May 2025, Keynote Speaker, International Academic Esports Seminar, Grimstad, Norway ”Ineffagram”
- Feb 2025, Organized RTF Animation Celebration 2025, Austin, TX
- Nov 2024, Invited Speaker, Mittweida Medienforum”, “Subverting Cinematic Momentum.”, Mittweida, Germany
- Oct 2024, Organized RTF Gaming Symposium, Austin, TX
- Oct, 2024, Invited Presenter UT OLLI Open House, “Drawing for Visual Effects”
- May 2024, Guest Artist, Filmmaking Abroad : Acting and Directing Global Seminar, Edinburgh, Scotland
- May 2024, Organized RTF Block Party 2024
    - collaboration between RTF department, KVRX student radio and TSTV Texas Student Television
- Organized Animation Celebration 2024
- Organized Moody Esports Symposium (and Video Game Tournament) 2023
- March 2022, Speaker, “Speedrun : A (not so) Brief History of Virtual Worlds”, GDC2
- March 2022, Speaker and RTF representative “Moody Recruitment Event”, Moody College of Communications

- February 2022, Guest Lecture “Aesthetics of Virtual Worlds”, ICC program, Stan Richards School of Advertising and Public Relations
- November 2021, Keynote Speaker, “Emergent Cinematic Arts” COM 301E Intro To Communications Foundations, Moody College of Communication
- March 2021, MODD “Introduction to Game Design”, Moody College of Communication
- February 2021, Interviewed for KXAN piece “ “Video game industry levels up as more people stay home and play during pandemic.”
- October 2020, Speaker, Bridging Disciplines Program, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- July 2020, Panelist, “Architecting Online Courses”, Moody College Online Teaching and Learning Program, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- October 2019, Speaker, Bridging Disciplines Program, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- September 2019, Guest Artist, “Introduction to 2D Animation”, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- June 2019, Keynote Speaker, TED4SC: Technology, Engineering and Design for Science Communication, Faculdade De Ciências Da Universidade Do Porto / Porto, Portugal
- June 2019, Presenter, “Digital Composition on the Unreliable Canvas”, ISEA Summer School, Faculdade De Ciências Da Universidade Do Porto / Porto, Portugal
- May 2019, Guest Artist, UT Live Design Showcase, 2019
- May 2018, Guest Artist, UT Live Design Showcase 2018
- March 2018, Presenter, *“Creating Virtual Worlds”*, UT Explore, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- February 2018, Visiting Professor, National College of the Arts / Lahore, Pakistan
- November 2017, Speaker, *“Non Linear Narrative Production”* National College of the Arts / Lahore, Pakistan (live video lecture)
- October 2017, Guest Artist, “*Enron Raptor Class*”, Department of Theater and Dance, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- July 2017, Visiting Artist, *“Immersive Media: Producing Augmented Reality for Storytelling Projects”* iNova Media Lab, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa / Lisbon, Portugal
- May 2017, Guest Artist, UT Live Design Showcase 2017
- April 2017, Speaker, *“Creating Virtual Worlds”*, UT Explore, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- April 2017, Guest Lecturer, *“Introduction to Image and Sound”*, RTF Department, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- May 2016, Guest Artist, UT Live Design Showcase 2016
- February 2016, Speaker, *“Level Up: Topics in Video Games and Interactive Storytelling Production”,* Longhorn Center for Academic Excellence, The University of Texas / Austin, TX

- April 2016, Speaker, *“Virtual Worlds”*, UT Explore, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- April 2015, Presenter, *“Creating Virtual Worlds”*, UT Explore, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- April 2014, Presenter, *“Create Interactive Worlds”*, UT Explore, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- September 2016, Panelist, *“Radio-Television-Film”*, Moody College Family Weekend, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- April 2012, Speaker, “Creating Video Games from Concept to Completion”, SAGE Lecture Series, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- April 2012, Speaker, “Cinematography for Digital Painters”, SB Explore / Steambot Concept Art Workshop, New Orleans, LA
- July 2011, Instructor, “ZON Portugal Animation Workshop”, The University of Texas / Austin, TX
- March 2011, Guest Artist, *“Animation Workshop”*, Monstra Festival de Animação / Lisbon, Portugal
- February 2011, Guest Artist, “IGDA Career Catalyst”, IGDA Austin/Mary Margaret / Austin, TX
- February 2011, Guest Lecturer, “Introduction to 2D Animation”, The University of Texas / Austin, TX

Service

- (Chair) of the UT Instructional Technology Committee. 2025
- RTF Media Studies Tenure Track hiring committee 2024 - 2025
- C13 Instructional Technology Committee (university) 2023-
- RTF Undergraduate Curriculum Committee 2022-2025
- Online Curriculum Committee 2017-2023
- RTF Co-Teaching Committee 2022
- Moody Commencement Marshal 2023 -
- Texas Commission on the Arts Young Masters-Visual & Media Arts Evaluation Panel 2021
- RTF Budget Council 2017-2023
- Digital Arts and Media BDP Faculty Panel 2017-
    - And Admissions Sub-Committee
- Game Dev and Design Steering Committee (*university)* 2020-
- Imagine Moody Stewardship Council 2019-
- Experiential Learning Initiative Ambassador 2019-2022

- Women in Animation Student Club Faculty Sponsor 2020-
- E-Portfolio Taskforce 2019-2021
- UT Theater and Dance Live Design Faculty Respondent 2021
- Game and Mobile Media Applications (GAMMA) Faculty 2012-2019
    - Prepare and contribute students for Capstone certificate program
- Moody College Undergraduate Scholarship Committee 2020-2021
- Undergraduate Learning Assistant Faculty Supervisor 2020
- RTF Equipment Requests Committee 2018-2019
- Undergraduate Learning Assistant Pilot Program 2017
    - Faculty Mentor
- Principal Agent (sunsetting) the administration of the Denius Sams Gaming Academy.
- CIIM Director Search Committee 2017
    - Represent The RTF department in a college level search for center director
- Facilities/Technology Committee 2016
    - Evaluate requests for technology upgrades to enhance teaching at undergraduate and graduate level
- RTF Chair Search Committee 2016-2017
    - Evaluate and interview candidates
- Moody College Scholarship Committee 2016-2017
- MFA Production Admissions Committee 2014-2015
- Explore UT 2013-2019

Awards and Recognition

- COVID Transformational Online Instruction Contributions (TONIC) Award
- Recognized in appreciation by Services for Students with Disabilities with a very nice clock on my desk
- “Nicest Boy in 2nd Grade” Azle Optimist Club, Azle, Texas, 1980