

mike dietz animation director

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www.mikedietz.com

professional experience

owner/animation director

Pencil Test Studios

lake forest, ca, 2009 to present

- Co-founder and animation director of an independent animation and game development studio specializing in development, production services and content creation for games, television, film, web and mobile devices.
- Art directed and animated on a broad range of projects in a wide variety of 2D, cg, stop motion and mixed media animation styles, working with high profile clients such as Disney/Pixar, Nickelodeon, McDonalds, Microsoft, and House of Moves.
- Worked with numerous game development studios, providing game specific animation production and consulting services, leveraging extensive experience working within game development pipelines.
- Responsible for establishing and managing in-house and outsourced animation production.
- Established and maintained company's internship program, supervising student interns from schools such as Laguna College of Art and Design and BYU.

animation director

Papaya Studio

irvine, ca, 2009

- Brought in specifically as directing animator on a console game featuring Disney/Pixar's *Toy Story* characters in order to leverage my previous experience with the characters and with Pixar as a production partner.
- Worked directly with Pixar creatives to ensure characters and game content remained true to the sensibilities of the original properties.
- Responsible for recruiting, directing, mentoring and managing of animation team.

animation director/principal animator

Heavy Iron Studios/THQ

los angeles, ca, 2005 to 2007

- Animation director and principal animator for high-profile interactive entertainment studio, specializing in the development of character driven games based on Disney/Pixar and Nickelodeon properties.
- In addition to creating production animation assets, responsibilities included establishing and managing the studio's animation department, overseeing all in-house and outsourced production, and also planning of future projects and studio growth in collaboration with other studio directors.
- Part of a small team directly responsible for establishing and maintaining creative relationships with production partners such as Pixar, ensuring productions effectively align with their creative sensibilities.
- Responsible for recruiting, mentoring and managing all animation staff, collaborating with engineering and art leads in development of project pipelines, tools and technologies, and directly participating in the design, development and production of all in-house titles.

animation director/animation lead

The Collective

irvine, ca, 2003 to 2005

- Animation director and animation project lead for cutting edge interactive entertainment studio, producing animation assets as well as managing several animation teams across studio's concurrent development of multiple titles.
- Responsible for recruiting, mentoring and managing animation staff, collaborating with tech and art leads in development of project pipelines, tools and technologies, and participating in the design, development and production of all in-house titles.

freelance animator/illustrator

Slappy Pictures

laguna niguel, ca, 2002 to present

- Founder and managing director of contract animation studio specializing in cel, stop-motion and cg animation. Services offered range from pre-production to post, including character and prop design, background styling, illustration, layout and posing, storyboards, animatics, clean up, full animation in a variety of media, digital ink and paint, compositing and digital post production.
- Projects include television series, short films, commercial spots, theme parks and location based entertainment, feature film title sequences, corporate videos, interactive entertainment titles and animation for the web and mobile devices.
- Partial client list includes: Walt Disney Imagineering, Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, The Jim Henson Co., Vinton Studios, Disney Interactive, DreamWorks, LucasArts, *The Wall Street Journal*, Scholastic and *Time for Kids*.

director

Vinton Studios, "The PJs"

portland, or, 1999 to 2001

- Episode director of "*The PJs*", a half-hour, stop-motion animated television series produced for Fox Television/The WB Network.
- Responsibilities included visual development of episodes and supervising all aspects of production, including storyboarding, v.o. recording, animatic, sets, puppets and props, lighting, animation, editing and post production.

producer/director/supervising animator

The Neverhood

mission viejo, ca, 1995 to 1998

- Co-founder of award winning interactive entertainment company specializing in stop-motion puppet and clay animation.
- Set up studio from scratch, supervised all animation production and collaborated with programmers in development of proprietary technologies required to produce a stop-motion PC game.
- The company's first project, *The Neverhood Chronicles*, won Best Animation on a Game Platform at the World Animation Celebration.

animation director

Shiny Entertainment

laguna beach, ca, 1993 to 1995

- Director of animation and lead animator for award winning interactive entertainment company specializing in traditional cel animation.
- Responsible for setting up and managing the company's animation department and supervising both staff and freelance animation artists.
- Collaborated with programmers in development of proprietary animation software and processes for digitizing traditional animation for use on video game platforms

supervising animator

Virgin Interactive Entertainment

irvine, ca, 1991 to 1993

- Director of animation for interactive entertainment company specializing in cel and computer animation.
- Responsible for setting up and managing the company's animation department and supervising both staff and freelance animation artists.
- Collaborated with programmers in development of proprietary animation software and processes.

education

john watkiss master classes, los angeles, ca

progressive anatomy and composition, 2006

saddleback college, mission viejo, ca

advanced life drawing, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004

irvine valley college, irvine, ca

advanced life drawing, 2003

kuenster bros. school of animation, venice, ca

classical animation. 1993

graphic artists' guild, ny, ny

professional education program, illustration workshops,
illustrator's guide to the marketplace, 1988, 1989

school of visual arts, ny, ny

advertising art direction workshop, 1987, 1988

syracuse university, syracuse, ny

bachelor of fine arts
advertising design/illustration, 1985

software skills

animation/compositing

maya, 3ds max, flash, toon boom harmony, animator pro, digicel flipbook, after effects, premiere, dragonframe, deluxe animator

graphics/illustration

photoshop, sketchbook pro, painter, illustrator, procreate

game development

unreal engine, unity

audio editing

soundbooth, sound forge, audacity, magpie pro, audition

management

alien brain, source safe, perforce, shotgun, excel, filmaker, visual studio, tortoiseSVN

creative activities

film, television and location based entertainment:

“Mr. Hara”

creator/director/ animator

Short film, currently in production. Pencil Test Studios.

“CBGB”

animator

2013. Feature film. Unclaimed Freight Productions - Randall Miller, director.

“It’s a SpongeBob Christmas”

stop motion animator

2012. TV special. Nickelodeon/Screen Novelties.

“Nestle Quik Bunny”

character supervisor

2013. TV commercial pitch. Kilt Studios/Pencil Test Studios.

“No More Kings: Robots Don't Cry”

director/animator

2012. Music video. Astonish Records/Pencil Test Studios

“JCP Black Friday”

stop motion animator

2012. TV commercials. Buck/Starburns Industries.

“Disney Aulani Menehune Adventure Trail”

production designer/animator

2011. Vacation resort interactive attraction. Walt Disney Imagineering.

“Public Storage 'Why Choose Us?'/‘How to Store...’”

animation director

2011. web commercials. The Phelps Group/Pencil Test Studios.

“iMattress 'Beam’”

animation director

2011. TV commercial. Gassel Productions/Pencil Test Studios.

“Freddi the Dog”

storyboard artist/character designer

2011. TV series pitch. Randy Herman/Pencil Test Studios.

“Community – Abed’s Uncontrollable Christmas”

stop motion animator

2010. TV series - Christmas special. NBC/Starburns Industries.

“Walt Disney World Paris 'New Generations’”

cg animator

2010. TV commercial. Disney Destinations/Motion Theory/Pixar/Pencil Test Studios.

“McDonalds 'Frappe’”

animator

2010. TV commercial. Bully Brothers Post/Pencil Test Studios.

“Walt Disney World 'Toys’”

cg animator/production designer/storyboard artist

2009. TV commercial. Disney Destinations/Pixar/Pencil Test Studios.

- “Kim Possible World Showcase Adventure”**
production designer/animation director
2008. Epcot theme park interactive attraction. Walt Disney Imagineering.
- “Squirly Town”**
co-director/production designer
2006. TV short/pilot. Nickelodeon /Frederator Studios.
- “Sockbaby”**
animation director
2004. Short film. Westhavenbrook Productions.
- “Catscratch”**
animation director
2003. TV series promo. Douglas R. TenNapel Inc/Nickelodeon.
- “Bad Day Bob”**
co-creator/director
2002. TV/Interactive title promo. The Jim Henson Company.
- “The Cartoon Cartoon Show – Jeffrey Cat, Claw and Order”**
production designer/ animator
2001. Television series segment. Cartoon Network.
- “The PJs”**
director
1999 to 2001. Television series. Will Vinton Studios.
- “Koghead and Meatus”**
animation director
2000. Short film. Douglas R. TenNapel Inc.
- “Glade Plugins 'Funnies'”**
2D animation director/stop motion animator
1999. TV commercial. Will Vinton Studios.
- “3 Musketeers 'Corruption'”**
2D animator
1999. TV commercial. Will Vinton Studios.
- “Puffs”**
2D animator
1999. TV commercial. Will Vinton Studios.
- “Dairy Management 'Behold the Power of Cheese - Clay People’”**
stop motion animator
1998. TV commercial. Will Vinton Studios.
- “Clay’s TV”**
stop motion animator
1998. Television pilot. Vinton Studios – Will Vinton, director.
- “Mothman”**
main title stop motion animator
1998. Feature film. Mr. Black Productions – Douglas TenNapel, director.
- “Tokoro George”**
main title animator
1998. Television series (Japan). The Neverhood.

video games and interactive entertainment:

Disney Illusions

animation director/character designer

2016 (cancelled). Xbox One. Disney Interactive/Dlala Studios/ Pencil Test Studios.

Armikrog

animation director

2015. PC, Mac, Linux, Wii U, PS4, Xbox One. Pencil Test Studios.

Magic Gumball

animation director/art director

2014. iPhone, iPad. Aeria Games/Pencil Test Studios.

Sonic Boom: Rise of Lyric

cinematic animator

2014. Wii U. Sega/Big Red Button

“Gunpowder”

character designer/cinematic animator

2013. Windows 8, Windows RT. Microsoft Game Studios/Rogue Rocket Games.

“Throne Together”

character designer/cinematic animator

2013. Windows 8, Windows Phone 8. Microsoft Game Studios/Rogue Rocket Games.

“Critical Hit”

animation director

2012 (cancelled) . iPhone, iPad. Spark Unlimited/Pencil Test Studios.

“Family Guy: Back to the Multiverse”

concept artist/animator

2012. Xbox 360, PS3. Activision/Heavy Iron Studios.

“My Pet Monsters”

character designer/character modeler/rigger

2012. iPhone, iPad. Saban Brands.

“Party Politics”

animator

2012. Facebook game. Checkpoint Studios.

“AviNation”

animator

2012. Facebook game. Checkpoint Studios.

“War of the Worlds”

animator

2011. Xbox 360, PS3. Other Ocean Interactive.

“Cartoon Network: Punch Time Explosion”

cinematic animator

2011. Nintendo 3DS, Wii. Crave Entertainment/Papaya Studio.

“God of War III”

cinematic animator

2010. PS3. Sony Computer Entertainment/House of Moves.

- “Disney’s Tangled”**
animator
2010. Nintendo DS, Wii. Disney Interactive/Planet Moon Studios.
- “Cars Toon: Mater’s Tall Tales”**
animator
2010. Nintendo Wii. Disney Interactive/Papaya Studio.
- “Toy Story Mania”**
animation director
2009. Nintendo Wii. Disney Interactive/Papaya Studio.
- “Pixar’s Up”**
cinematic animator
2009. Xbox 360, PS3. THQ/Heavy Iron Studios.
- “Pixar’s WALL-E”**
animator, preproduction
2008. Xbox 360, PS3. THQ/Heavy Iron Studios.
- “Pixar’s Ratatouille”**
animation director
2007. Xbox 360, PS3. THQ/Heavy Iron Studios.
- “The Incredibles, Rise of the Underminer”**
animation director
2005. Xbox, PS2, Nintendo Game Cube. Heavy Iron Studios/THQ.
- “Star Wars Episode III, Revenge of the Sith”**
animation director
2005. Xbox, PS2. LucasArts/The Collective.
- “Marc Ecko’s Getting U.P., Contents Under Pressure”**
cinematics consultant/senior animator
2005. PS2. Atari/The Collective.
- “Wrath Unleashed”**
directing animator
2004. Xbox, PS2. LucasArts/The Collective.
- “Boombots”**
cinematics director/senior animator
1999. Sony PlayStation. The Neverhood.
- “Skullmonkeys”**
animation director/producer
1997. Sony PlayStation. The Neverhood.
- “The Neverhood”**
animation director
1996. PC CD-Rom. The Neverhood.
- “Earthworm Jim 2”**
animation director
1995. Sega Genesis/Saturn, Super Nintendo. Shiny Entertainment.
- “Earthworm Jim Special Edition”**
animation director
1995. Sega CD. Shiny Entertainment.
- “Pitfall, the Mayan Adventure”**
consulting animator/art director
1994. Sega Genesis. Activision.

“Earthworm Jim”

animation director

1994. Sega Genesis, Super Nintendo. Shiny Entertainment.

“Disney’s Jungle Book”

supervising animator

1994. Sega Genesis. Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

“Disney’s Aladdin”

animation director

1993. Sega Genesis. Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

“Robocop vs. Terminator”

consulting animator

1993. Sega Genesis. Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

“Cool Spot”

supervising animator

1993. Sega Genesis. Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

“Global Gladiators”

supervising animator

1992. Sega Genesis. Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

“Monopoly Deluxe”

lead animator

1992. PC game. Virgin Interactive Entertainment.

awards:

Annie Awards, International Animated Film Society, ASIFA-Hollywood

2016 Nominated, Outstanding Achievement for Character Animation in a Video Game, *Armikrog*

2008 Won, Best Animated Video Game, *Ratatouille*

Curse Awards, Curse.com

2015 Won, "Game We Can't Wait to Play", *Armikrog*

World Animation Celebration

1997 Won, Best Animation Produced for Game Platforms, *The Neverhood*

1997 Nominated, Best Director of Animation Produced for a Game Platform, *Earthworm Jim*

3rd Annual Murphey Awards, PC Game Magazine

1997 Won, Best Animation, *The Neverhood*

BIMA Awards, British Interactive Multimedia Association

1997 Nominated, Best Graphics and Animation, *The Neverhood*

1997 Nominated, Best Game, *The Neverhood*

Gamecenter Awards '96, Gamecenter.com

1996 Won, Adventure Game of the Year, *The Neverhood*

Game of the Year, Diehard Game Fan

1994 Won, Best Game of '94, *Earthworm Jim*

1994 Won, Best New Character, *Earthworm Jim*

Best Genesis Game of '94, Electronic Gaming Monthly

1994 Won, *Earthworm Jim*

CES Best Genesis Game of the Year, Gamepro Magazine

1994 Won, *Earthworm Jim*

Best of '94, Video Games Magazine

1994 Won, Best Game, Genesis, *Earthworm Jim*

1994 Won, Best New Character, *Earthworm Jim*

CES Best of Show, Gamepro Magazine

1993 Won, *Disney's Aladdin*

Best Genesis Game of '93, Electronic Gaming Monthly

1993 Won, *Disney's Aladdin*

Genesis Game of the Year, Gamepro Magazine

1993 Won, *Disney's Aladdin*

Third Party Game of the Year - Genesis, Sega

1992 Won, *Global Gladiators*

Illustration West 31, Society of Illustrators of Los Angeles

1992 Certificate of Merit, 4 illustrations accepted into the SILA annual show

panels and lectures:

2016 NASSCOM Game Developers Conference

Hyderabad, India

"**The Art of Independent Games**", featured speaker

2016 Ground Zero Animation Expo

Anaheim, CA

"**Avenues in Animation**", panelist

2015 World Animation Celebration

Los Angeles, CA

"**Mermaids on Mars**", panel moderator -- stop motion animation panel discussion

2015 Gumby Fest Stop Motion Festival

Glendora, CA

"**State of the Art: What's Next?**", panelist

"**Running an Animation Studio**", panelist

1998 LA SIGGRAPH Career Boot Camp

Los Angeles, CA

"**What we wish we knew when we were new**", panelist

1998 New Animation Technology Conference (NATE)

Pasadena, CA

"**Get a Job**", panelist

service activities

professional service:

International Animated Film Society, ASIFA-Hollywood

Member of ASIFA-Hollywood - 2009 to present
ASIFA Leadership meeting: Game Development and the Animation Community - 2011
Annie Awards Nominating Committee - 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016
Annie Awards Final Selection Committee - 2014

Gnomon School of Visual Effects

Volunteer "Work In Progress/WIP" website, provided feedback for student work - 2016

Laguna College of Art and Design - Student Internship Program

Provided internship opportunities at my company Pencil Test Studios for students studying Animation and Game Art at the Laguna College of Art and Design - Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Fall 2015

community service:

Actors for Autism Advance Media Vocational Academy Studio Tour

Provided a studio tour and Q&A session for a group of students studying at AMVA. AMVA is a program within Actors for Autism providing adults with autism job training and hands-on work experience in film and television production - 2015

Trabuco Hills High School Presentation

Visited a local high school and gave a presentation on animation. Met with students afterward and provided critiques to their work - 2014

El Dorado High School Job Shadowing Program

Participated in a job shadowing program, allowing high school students interested in a career in animation to job shadow myself and other employees at my company Pencil Test Studios - 2014

El Toro High School, Digital Media Arts Class Tour

Provided a studio tour and Q&A session for a group of students studying Digital Media Arts at a local high school - 2014

Vital Link Digital Media Arts Advisory Board Meetings

Volunteered to act as an advisor to the career technical educators in the school systems throughout Orange County. Reviewed a list of competencies covered in the curriculum and participated in an advisory board meetings comprised of industry panel discussions and breakout sessions - 2012