Blender for Storyboard Artists

TERM: Sunday 10:00am-1:00pm PST

8 week course

Instructor:

David Maximo, storyboard artist/director

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Course Description:

Join a curated learning environment designed specifically for storyboard professionals looking to leverage Blender in their workflow. This hands-on, project-based course runs for 8 weeks and features light assignments focused on mastering key 3D concepts rather than heavy production demands. The goal is to equip you with the technical confidence to work faster and smarter. While all students will gain essential skills, an optional portfolio-ready storyboard assignment is available for those who wish to complete a full project by the end of the term. By joining the course, you also have access to exclusive addons not found anywhere else online.

- Industry Insights: Gain valuable insights an industry professional. Learn about the latest trends and techniques in action storyboarding and how to apply them in an animated action show like X-Men 97. While its possible to complete the assignments entirely in Blender, Toonboom Storyboard Pro is highly recommended and will be demo-ed at times to showcase Blender's usage in professional application.
- Portfolio Development: For ambitious students, there are 8 week long portfolio projects that are available to tinker with and get feedback on.

Who Should Enroll:

This course is perfect for:

- Intermediate-level storyboard artists
- filmmakers or VFX professionals interested in previs basics
- 2d Story Artists looking to incorporate more 3d into their workflow— whether that be to save on time, stage things more thoughtfully, or draw more on model.
- Animators looking to enhance their storyboarding skills for action-packed projects.
- Digital artists interested in expanding their expertise in grease pencil for storyboarding.
- Anyone passionate about storytelling and eager to bring their action sequences to life with Blender.

Required Software

Blender, Toonboom Storyboard Pro (highly recommended)

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: Blender viewport, transformations, and thumbnailing

Lecture:

- Introductions
- Overview of materials needed and class expectations
- What is Pre-viz?
- Why paper is king
- Overview of thumbnailing in 3d.

Demo:

- Overview of thumbnailing & breakdowns using Toonboom
- Getting started with Blender
    - Shortcuts, settings, and startup files
    - viewport settings & workspaces
    - alpha/transparency settings
    - Export options
    - Importing references
    - cardboard cutouts

Homework

- Create cardboard cutouts of characters

Week 2: Modelling, cleanup, & collections.

Lecture/ Showcase:

- Share Last week's assignment
- Learning camera and framing techniques
- Importance of lenses

Demo & Share

- Finding free fair-use models on the internet & how to clean them up
    - https://www.blender.org/download/demo-files/
    - https://www.reallusion.com/character-creator/free-3d-character-base.html
- Use sketchup addon
    - learn how to breakdown models, simplify pivots
    - keeping scenes tidy

        - Toonboom integration tricks- where to Blender, and where not to Blender
    - Modelling a set
        - Learning transformation tools in depth— shortcuts, local, global normal
    - Share Last week's assignment

Homework

- Model a set

Week 3: The Five Modalities of Grease Pencil

Lecture/ Showcase:

- Share Last week's assignment

Demo

- An overview of the five main use cases of grease pencil
    - Grease pencil as a dumb overlay layer
    - Grease pencil as individual characters
    - Grease pencil as background decoration
    - Grease pencil as a matte
    - Grease pencil as FX

Homework:

- Demonstrate the five modalities of grease pencil.

Week 4: Timeline, Camerawork & Lenses

Lecture/ Showcase:

- Share Last week's assignment

Demo

- Learn how to setup cameras
- Keyframing & interpolation
- Lens theory

Homework:

- storyboard a short sequence (4-5 shots) using grease pencil/proxies keyed out on the timeline.

Week 5: Asset Management w Blender & Rigging

Lecture/ Showcase:

- Share Last week's assignment

Demo

- How to create assets
- selection sets
- How to organize assets
- Using rigs/ pose mode
- Using Mixamo & custom mixamo plugin
- mirror blend pose
- pose assets

Homework

- Build a rig & prepare to show and tell your new custom asset library with various asset types.

Week 6: More rigging, path constraints, and curves

Lecture/ Showcase:

- Share Last week's assignment

Demo & Share

- Using rigify & skinnify
- editing bones
- converting rigs into assets
- using pose libraries
- editing curves
- constraints

Homework

- build a vehicular rig and animate it on a curve.

Week 7: FX animation using Grease Pencil & Lighting

Lecture/ Showcase:

- Share Last week's assignment

Demo & Share

- how to cycle animations

- grease pencil modifiers
- grease pencil effect tab
- grease pencil lighting & shadows
- lighting settings

Homework

- Create your own grease pencil FX and showcase it

Week 8: Basic compositing & overview

Lecture/ Showcase:

- Share Last week's assignment

Demo & Share

- Going over compositor & cryptomatte & world
- Review five modalities of GP
- how to start difficult action shots