

In the Spotlight

Godwin Akpan



Akpan Godwin is a self-taught artist currently based in Lagos, Nigeria. Akpan works full-time at storyboards for films and later progressed to creating concept art and matte paintings for different projects. Akpan is skilled in areas like comic book illustration, character and environment design, props and vehicle designs, and more.

Find out what Akpan has to say on using VUE to create his stunning artwork in this Spotlight Interview!

e-on software: What is your background?

Akpan Godwin: I am a concept artist/illustrator currently working in the entertainment industry, designing for movies, games, graphic novels and the like. My passion for drawing drew me toward this career path. I had always wanted to practice art fulltime, so I took a course in fine art when I was in college. My vision wasn't so clear at the time, but over the years I have been able to narrow down my career path.

I am more proficient in creating environment designs, but I don't limit myself to doing just that. I also create a lot of character design, creature design, as well as prop design. However, I definitely enjoy working on environment designs the most. I love creating fantasy environments because it allows me to explore deeper levels of my creativity.

I love not knowing what the future will hold, but I am very positive that amazing things are sure to happen. One that I am very hopeful for is collaborating with guys like Dylan Cole, Feng Zhu, James Paick, and so on. These are my mentors and I look forward to a future where I can work with them on a bigger project.

e: What is your experience with VUE?

AG: I have been using VUE for about 3 years now and I can't over-emphasize how helpful it has been in my workflow. Because I love creating epic landscapes, it was love at first sight when I first discovered VUE.



With its ecosystem population and atmosphere editor I couldn't resist the urge to implement it into my process. I love how quickly it enables me to create a mood that I can later integrate into my concept art or mood board.

My most recent professional project was the animated teaser for Malikah- Warrior Queen. In that project, I was responsible for both conceptualizing the environment as well as doing the final matte painting. VUE was very helpful in creating the mood board. I did some quick renderings of an atmosphere I created in VUE and then did some over painting in Photoshop just to give the director a visual palette for the final production. For the final matte painting, I was able to use the same atmosphere I generated earlier to create an epic landscape that was later composited in a different 3D application. The results turned out great and I can say I am particularly proud of my work on this project.

The biggest challenge I faced while working on Malikah was how to use the VUE scene in 3dsmax as a backdrop for the animation. Because I knew the camera would rotate a couple of times around the character, I had to render a panoramic 360 image that would later be used as an HDRI in 3dsmax. But in doing so, it was still essential that we saw some parallax, so I had to render different layers separately, so we could later texture them on multiple sphere objects with an alpha matte in 3dsmax and use this as the environment HDRI. It was a little technical, but we made it work and the results were great.

I love to try different approaches on each project, but in most cases I start with a rough sketch in Photoshop and then jump into VUE to start blocking out some basic objects to get my composition. Afterwards, I plan the lighting and atmosphere. If I have to use other 3D assets, I usually build these in software like Zbrush and import the fbx or obj format into VUE. Depending on what I want the final product to look like, I often spend some quality time creating materials



in VUE. Sometimes I export my terrain to World Machine to create some erosion effects as well. I love realistic renderings, but because of the time it takes to render, I usually drop the quality so I can do some extra post work in Photoshop.

I have seen some awesome vegetation created with PlantFactory, but I personally haven't tried using it. So far, I've just been comfortable using the plant assets that VUE offers. However, I hope to try it in the future because I think it's a great software to add to my tool kit.

e: Do you have any advice to share?

AG: My first piece of advice is to be committed. You can't grow in this field if you don't commit. You have to commit to learning new things and you have to commit to constant practice. Almost any skill will come in handy when you are a concept artist, but the essentials include; understanding anatomy, structure, perspective, and color properties. As a concept artist you will need to understand the world around you, so expand your knowledge in other areas rather than just the arts.

You also should build your visual library. Create a personal collection of reference photos that feature different art movements, architecture, fashion, technology and things like that. You also have to keep up with the pace of the industry. Be curious about new developments. And lastly, connect with others in your field and get feedback from professionals.

Of course, I would recommend VUE to other artists. I think it's a fantastic software if you love creating environments, like I do. In fact, I am happy to say that some of my friends have acknowledged that I have inspired them to also test out VUE. This is very rewarding for me personally, and I hope to inspire more people as I continue with my work.

Thanks Akpan! Don't forget to check out his projects at:

<https://coldflames.artstation.com>