

In the Spotlight

Antony Carlyon



Meet graphic designer and aspiring 2D concept artist, **Antony Carlyon**.

Antony works as a creative lead for an in-house agency in England. His artwork truly showcases the passion he has for his career and is what drives him to create the inspiring and stunning work we see today.

Find out what Antony says on his experience with VUE, his passion for digital art, and his advice for newcomers!

e-on software: What is your background?

Antony Carlyon: By day, I'm a creative lead in an in-house agency for a large rural/agricultural company in North Devon, England; by night, I'm an aspiring 2D concept artist. I initially wanted to get into a career in 3D after college, but this was the early 2000's, and that kind of job just didn't really exist, so my passion became my hobby and I went down the route of a graphic designer. I love using creative elements to tell a story and graphic design allowed me to explore that avenue. It taught me about balance, composition and communication through storytelling.

I started out in my career as a freelancer and did this for about ten years before finally deciding to lay down roots when my wife and I, two children, two cats, a dog, and a grandma relocated from Windsor to North Devon. I still kept my passion for 3D alive and have dabbled in various software packages and disciplines throughout my working life. I found I was always trying to introduce 3D into my workflow and I now use it quite a lot day to day when creating packaging for new products or merchandising projects.



I don't think I have a typical working day, the projects created in the studio are so varied. You can start the week creating a graphic for promotional giveaways such as mugs, hats, and t-shirts, and end it creating a two-story show stand for a large exhibition. I work on a lot of branding products that range from clothing to new acquisition branding creations, not to mention the day to day requests for all manner of literature for advertising. I also create storyboards for photoshoots and 3D visuals for store refits and product launches.

I've found that, as well as using VUE for my final background renders, it works very well when setting up my shots (kind of like 3D thumbnails). It's important for me to learn as much as I can, as fast as I can (starting to learn concept art at 42!) and having tools such as VUE handling things such as lighting and perspective is an absolute godsend. I do a lot of photo bashing/kit bashing work but have found that as I have been developing my skills I need more out of my source material. VUE gives me

the ability to create custom-built environments for my work so I don't have to compromise on elements of my storytelling. For instance, the pieces I'm working on at the moment have required a lot of work with water and cloud setups as well as mountain ranges and VUE has been an essential tool in creating these atmospheres.

My hopes for the future are to spend more time doing what I love. My passion for creativity and technology has rested very comfortably within the 3D arena and my love of environment design has driven me towards VUE. My goal is to spend the rest of my life learning as much about this field as I can, so I can continue doing what I enjoy.

e: What is your experience with VUE?

AC: I have spent the last few years using VUE to create engaging environments for my artwork. Its ability to create realistic renders has been invaluable and I find that its intuitive interface has allowed me to explore at my own pace. I will



often start creating a piece of artwork knowing that the finished background will be created in VUE. I have just upgraded my workstation which has given me a bit more power so I'm finding that I can bring in 3D objects and render out complete scenes within VUE's render engine.

I have been working on a lot of indie projects recently as I find they are a great way to introduce yourself into the industry. The more I understand about concept art, the more I see the need for some kind of education/knowledge of 3D. There are a lot of tools out there and it can be quite daunting picking the right software solution and then committing the time to learning said package.



Certainly, in the past I have thought I can't afford to experiment with a particularly complicated piece of software as the investment in time and money can be too costly.

I have always enjoyed using VUE as the end results are almost instant, I believe it's this that makes it fun to learn and in turn I believe you're more likely to retain those learnings. I think we have all been in a scenario where you're

learning a new task, glued to YouTube for hours doing the step by step only to find that you have forgotten it two weeks later because it felt like you were sitting in an exam while you were learning it.

A regular challenge I've faced while creating environment artwork was having a very specific idea of what I wanted and then not being able to achieve it based on the assets I had available at the time. Even with photo/kit bashing you are reliant on how far you can push the manipulation of an object or photo.

VUE allows me to create that space from scratch so I never feel like I'm comprising, and I love knowing that what I end up with will be stronger than my initial idea because VUE is accurately dealing with issues such as lighting and perspective and leaving me to focus on the imagination. I tend to start my projects with some thumbnails on my iPad or 3D thumbnails created with Adobe dimension. Once I have blocked out a rough idea of what I want, I will start creating my background in VUE (at this stage I will know whether I'm creating a mountain range, alien vista or vast jungle landscape). I use this background almost as a matte painting and will use it to help work out my lighting and overall composition. I have yet to use plant factory but it's definitely on my radar in the near future as I want to take my work further into organics (I've been watching a lot of Pirates of the Caribbean and Avatar).

e: Do you have any advice to share?

AC: I think that anyone that is looking at getting into the industry above all else needs to enjoy it. Really love what you do and be passionate about your work and your enthusiasm will be apparent to potential employers. I would also advise getting involved with indie groups online, it will give you an idea of how the industry works within a fairly safe environment. Also, it will introduce you to other people who share the same interests (which creates a very natural learning environment).

I think that the best way to learn is by doing. It's great that we have so many tutorials on YouTube, Gum Road and Udemy, but I think nothing beats sitting down and really playing with the software. In the past I have sat down for literally hours watching tutorials and not picking up half as much as I have in an hour of simply exploring an interface or playing with



deforming tools.

Also pick software that you are comfortable with. In the beginning there will always be the temptation to jump straight into the industry standard packages, but even the pro concept artists worked their way up to what they are using. You don't want to risk becoming overwhelmed and walking away completely. I have been using VUE, Adobe Dimension and Fuse because they are easy to pick up, difficult to put down, and work well alongside other 3D packages. This has led to a basic understanding of the features within Maya, Cinema 4D and Zbrush (it's all a very natural progression and it's keeping it fun and interesting, rather than being big and scary).

Post everything you do in the beginning on sites like ArtStation and DeviantArt, actively seek constructive criticism and then act on it (don't take anything personally). Also keep everything you do, you'll be surprised how fast you progress in a month and being able to look back (while it might make you cringe) will help boost your confidence.

I take inspiration wherever I can get it and so whilst big influencers come from film, literature and music, I make a point to keep my eyes open. I spend a lot of time freeze framing films to look at composition and value



(Lawrence of Arabia is a good one) and I'm constantly snapping away at interesting shapes when I see them.

ArtStation has also been a big inspiration and I find that I'm spending a lot of time these days just looking at other artists work and then trying to work out how they have achieved a certain effect or layout, often contacting artists to talk about their work.

I'm constantly recommending VUE to other environment artists. I think that the way in which VUE works is very organic, it has the uncanny ability to grow with you, and because it works so well with other industry standard software's it will never be something that you will put down. This has always made me feel that the time invested in it over the years was well spent and worth investing in more.

Thanks, Antony! Make sure to check out his portfolio at:
<https://www.artstation.com/antz>

