In the Spotlight

Tony Arechiga

Meet **Tony Arechiga**, vista artist for V1 Interactive! Inspired by the work of a few hit games and other talented artists, Tony decided to pursue a career in the gaming industry.

His epic compositions and willingness to continue learning and expanding his horizons are what sets him apart from the rest.

Learn more on how he got started in his career, his experience with VUE, his inspiration, helpful advice, and more!

e-on software: What is your background?

Tony Arechiga: I currently work in the video game industry as a vista artist for V1 Interactive on their first IP Disintegration. My entire life, I have always loved art and video games.

I started in the gaming industry as a QA tester at a company called Terminal Reality, and eventually worked my way into creating environment art on various games. It has been a 12-year journey of failures and success. I got into vista/skybox creation after being inspired by Skyrim, actually. I just loved all the sweeping vistas and landscapes in that game. So, I started on a quest to create vista shots I could put in my portfolio. Then Destiny (2014) came out and I was blown away by the skyboxes in that game. I decided to pursue a look in my portfolio inspired by that game. Eventually I took a chance and applied to Bungie for an environment art position. They asked if I would be interested in joining the sky team as a support role, and I had to do it. So, I uprooted my family in Texas, and moved to the magical PNW.

My area of expertise is vista creation. I love creating epic compositions with the use of clouds, and various terrain. The entire process of starting and finishing a vista is very rewarding work. It's very similar to concept art. You are just moving shapes around on a blank 3D canvas trying to find the best composition.

Tony Arechiga, 2019

e: What is a typical day like and your hopes for the future?

TA: A typical day is pretty straightforward. I get coffee, sit at my computer and grind out the days task. I have to usually force myself to go to lunch. My day to day can change depending on what is the highest priority task.

As for the future, I really love working on the non-playable vistas, but I would love to transition into doing concept art, or a lead artist/art director role. I have big ideas, and I love directing the mood for scenes. I would love to help drive the direction of an entire project eventually.

e: What is your experience with VUE?

TA: I have used VUE heavily for the past 3 years in my workflow. I absolutely love the panorama render feature, the layered .PSD render file, and the most important feature to me is the clean alpha you can get for clouds. The ability to move the sun around for different lighting scenarios is perfect for my projects too. I have used VUE on every skybox in Disintegration. I do love using it as a base to build off of and make the mattes my own. I am most proud of the background work for Disintegration! Leaving the massive AAA studio for the small 30-person V1 Interactive has been a huge creative boost for me. I have a lot more creative control over my content and my opinion is valued.

The biggest challenge I have faced on a recent project was jumping from a proprietary engine to using Unreal Engine 4. I was so used to doing things a certain way and had to shift my entire workflow. Unreal 4 is the best engine I have ever worked with! I then had to create my own workflow for the project. It didn't take me that long to get up and running with the tools. Anything you want to learn about UE4 Is online somewhere.

Tony Arechiga, 2019

When I first start working on a vista, I talk with the environment artist, and designers that own the level. We figure out the time of day, sun/moon location, mood, and what they would like to see in the distance. Establishing the light source location, fog, and global lighting first really helps the map come together faster. I then gather references and organize the images in PureRef (https://www.pureref.com/) I will make a quick sky in VUE and match it to the sun location. After that I will make mid-ground, distant, and hero terrain pieces to fill in the background. I use Photoshop, World Machine, Zbrush, Gaea, Substance Painter/Designer and photogrammetry for various assets.

Tony Arechiga, 2019

e: Do you have any advice to share?

TA: The best advice I can give is to find a company that has a style you love. Then put all your energy, and free time into building a portfolio that appeals to their style. Also, if you want to learn how to do game art, download Unreal Engine, and get some assets off the marketplace. Start building out a scene with these assets and learn the engine. Then pick a 3D modeling package and learn how to make

your own asset. Keep it simple! Then teach yourself how to get your asset from that package into Unreal. You can find all the tutorials you need on YouTube. Avoid all for profit colleges, and classes that guarantee you a job. Look into forums like Polycount, CGSociety, or mentorship programs like Learned Squared. Reach

out to artists you respect on ArtStation and ask for their advice. Find me on Facebook or Twitter, and I can point you in the right direction! I help anyone that reaches out.

e: What is your go-to method for learning?

TA: I love learning! I am always searching for new ways to make assets. For example, when Skyrim came out I started looking around for ways to make mountains in games. My Google searches lead me to World Machine. I started making landscapes in that program, but I didn't know how to get them into the game engine, Unity. I would get back on the internet and start digging through various forums, and YouTube channels until I found the answer. This is how I still learn today! I also have various techniques that I have created myself by combining different software packages. A lot of the techniques come to me at the most random times! I will document ideas in my phone if I am not near my computer and then try it out when I get home.

e: Where do you get your inspiration?

TA: My main sources of inspiration are film, games, and being outdoors! I spend a ton of time in the outdoors hiking up various mountain peaks in the Pacific North West. Seeing landscapes from various heights is a massive inspiration. Also, when certain games are released that have epic vistas and terrain, I can't help but look for the artist behind the work. I then will reach out to them for tips or talk about process. This really gets me fired up to make new content! Film is usually where I look for lighting, and mood inspiration.

e: Would you recommend VUE to other artists, and why?

TA: I recommend VUE to every concept, matte or sky artist I talk to! It is by far the best way to create a sky with a certain look. Having total control over the lighting and being able to render out a layered .PSD for photoshop edits is amazing! It's perfect for HDR sky lighting as well! You can take these renders into Substance, or Unreal to get your global lighting looking nice!

Thanks, Tony! Make sure to check out his portfolio at: www.to-nyarechiga.com
www.artstation.com/tarechiga
tony-arechiga-iv.cgsociety.org/

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