In the Spotlight

Julian Bauer

e-on software: What is your background?

Julian Bauer: Over the course of my studies, I had taught myself digital painting during my free time and gained a lot of enthusiasm for this field. Since my graduation, I have begun working on a 2D multiplayer game called Rise in Nature (riseinnature.com) as a game designer and artist in addition to my freelance work as a concept designer/illustrator.

During my time studying design, I learned to work in a wide range of digital design--from editorial design, website building, UX design over to video editing, motion graphics and basic 3D modelling. However, I don't see myself as a specialist in any of these areas. My area of expertise is creating quick visual concepts and highly detailed artwork/illustrations. What I enjoy the most about my work is the integration of my artwork in games and the moment when my created environment or character comes to life. Observing the players happily interacting with these gives me a satisfied feeling. The same goes for inspiring people with my artwork.

A typical work day consists of me being tired for the first two hours after I wake up. I am the kind of person who slowly pushes himself to get into a productive state. Once I reach that state I can work for hours straight into the night with lunch and dinner as my only break.

As I continue down my career path, I hope we can successfully publish and expand our game Rise in Nature and gain more talented people for our development team. In case this doesn't work out, I'll strive to work as a concept designer in a game development company.

e: What is your experience with VUE?

JB: I came across VUE around 2012. I don't remember exactly how I found it. I assume it was by looking at artwork made in VUE and then researching what kind of program it was. I was happy to see that e-on provided a free version, so I started using VUE Pioneer to play around and experiment with landscape compositions, atmosphere and lighting settings. I then began to use VUE to render nature landscapes as a paint-over base for personal artwork projects. The wide range of natural lighting and atmosphere tools is what I value most in VUE. These features helped me in speeding up my painting process a lot by being flexible in setting up the composition with terrain objects and finding the mood for the atmosphere and lighting.

I've been mostly using VUE for my personal projects and haven't yet had the chance to use VUE in many professional projects. Depending on the kind of artwork I have to create, I choose whether VUE is a useful tool to start with.

I have always had a hard time painting human beings by hand. The biggest challenge I've faced, and set up myself, was adding human figures to my artwork to contribute more storytelling. Instead of spending time studying human anatomy, I looked into the 3D software DAZ Studio. DAZ allows you to pose human bodies in every possible way and export them as a render image or any common 3D format to import the body into another 3D software of your choice. Most of my work has a painterly art style. This means I still have to paint over the rendered figures to visually integrate them into the artwork. So basically, I didn't really overcome this problem with a lot of struggling, but with the right choice of tools.

There is a variety of software I use to create my artwork. To paint or do any other 2D pixel related work, I use Photoshop. For specific 3D modelling purpos-

es, I use 3ds Max and DAZ Studio for posing human bodies. For creating specific landscape formations, I prefer World Machine. The export of the finished terrain in World Machine is then imported into VUE for texturing and rendering.

I usually have an idea of what I'd like to create before starting any first sketches. I break down the idea to figure out what kind of programs I need to use to realize my vision. Composition and lighting always have the highest priority in my workflow, and details come at the end. This sounds quite simple, but sometimes things don't work out the way I want and at the end of the process I need to ensure my initial idea was conveyed, even if I have to make major changes.

e: Do you have any advice to share?

JB: Passion for creating artwork is key. This is how I started digital painting in Photoshop and it's what keeps pushing me to improve my quality and to learn new stuff that can help me bring my ideas to life. I looked (and still look) at the work of the old masters and of today's professionals. I study their examples of how they handle light in their compositions or try to figure out what kind of brush techniques they use. If you feel the need to learn a new program, keep in mind that you don't have to overwhelm yourself with learning all of its tools, and can instead start with just the ones you need to realize your vision.

Music is a big source of inspiration for me. Besides that, looking at other artists' work inspires me a lot. If you experience an art block, I recommend going outside on a trip and doing different activities that are not art related. Inspiration will come back naturally.

Finally, I would highly recommend Vue to any artist that deals with realistic color perspective/atmosphere a lot. Using 3D programs to create a base to work with provides much more flexibility than doing things in only 2D.

Thanks Julian! Don't forget to check out his projects at:
https://www.artstation.com/julianb