

# Build a career in 3D and VFX

**Vancouver Film School** delivers a lasting education in a studio environment

The film industry is booming in Vancouver, increasingly being referred to as Hollywood North. British Columbia's film industry is thriving: it is the third largest film-production center in North America, employs roughly 50,000 people, and contributes more than \$1 billion a year to the province's economy.

Walking into Vancouver Film School's 3D Animation & Visual Effects program, you would swear you were in one of the city's many successful studios. And, in a way, you are. The halls, meeting rooms, and labs are buzzing with creativity and productivity, as students and faculty—comprising future, former, and current industry professionals—push the envelope and further the art of 3D animation and visual effects.

At Vancouver Film School (VFS), the 3D Animation & Visual Effects program intentionally emulates a production workflow. "We think of this place as a studio," explains Casey Kwan, professor of Concept Development/Creative Development. "The more we can behave that way and the more it simulates that environment, the more value it holds," not just for the students, but for their future employers and peers.

VFS instructors endeavor to mold "creative thinking artists" who know how to function in production environments, work in a team, fall into virtually any workflow, and anticipate and solve problems in a production. To do so, they expose students to the reality of the workplace, the industry, and the workflow.

VFS's 3D Animation & Visual Effects program

better than others, but they can do it all. If you go in as a specialist, what happens when someone writes the plug-in that makes you redundant? Be a generalist who can see his way out of that situation."

At the same time, animation and visual effects production is rarely a solo sport. The VFS faculty drives home the importance of working effectively in a team. "You're missing out if you are working in a vacuum," Bafia notes. VFS instructors caution students against narrowing down career aspirations too much. They teach specific tools, technologies, niches, and procedures, but they also put it all in perspective. "Education needs a context. You pick up lots of things at school, but it's about pulling it all together."

3D Animation & Visual Effects students start with a pencil, solving problems in 2D before moving into 3D space. 3D animation



**IMAGE CREDITS:** Modeling Reel - Julianna Kolakis, Buji - Francisco Moncayo, Animation Imagination - Zheng Tang, No Quarter - Michael Trent, Iepe - Jonata Alves

teaches students about and involves them in every process from pre-production to postproduction. Larry Bafia, Head of Animation & Visual Effects at VFS and a former Commercial Animation Director and Sequence Lead Animator at PDI/Dreamworks, finds it important to have an appreciation of a project and its production pipeline in their entirety.

In the intensive one-year 3D Animation & Visual Effects program at VFS, students produce a solo project in which they wear all the hats. "At the end, we explain, 'Every single thing you did for that project is an individual career. Which appeals to you? Which did you enjoy the most?' By starting out as a generalist, you are going to find your specialty and understand how what you do contributes to the whole," Bafia says.

"This room is full of chameleons," Bafia proclaims, casting an eye across a sea of people working and collaborating in the lab. "None of them are doing now what they started with; they may do certain things

students then take classical animation classes and get hands-on with sculpting, before moving to the latest digital tools.

"The minute you walk in this place, you are creating your portfolio—it's all valid work," Bafia explains. "Studios appreciate that you can tell your story with stick figures and use a storyboard, and students need all of it—not just the finished work, but the walk cycles, sack tests, lip sync exercises, etc.—in their portfolio. Graduates are now thankful for that foundation.

"It's important to know what your prize is... what your career path could be," suggests Bafia. "The more students can step out of school knowing their career path, how to communicate effectively, and how to present their work—man, they are on their way to a great career."

**To begin your career in 3D animation and visual effects, visit Vancouver Film Schools online at [www.vfs.com](http://www.vfs.com).**