

Shawn P. Kawa

Principal Realtime VFX Artist – Games

Los Angeles, CA | Remote • kawa@kawaart.com • kawaart.com • Shipped: MK9, MK8, Blade Runner: Revelations ,Spec Ops, Evil Within, Spellslingers, LOTR:return of the King, Batman: Arkham City Lockdown

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Principal Realtime VFX Artist. Shipped 9 AAA/console titles including Mortal Kombat 9, Spec Ops: The Line, The Evil Within, Spellslingers. Led FX teams of up to 8 artists across Unreal/Unity pipelines. Own tech direction, scheduling, and tool R&D.; Built AI-assisted workflows with Claude particle projector instead of decals/ VFX animation viewer. 23+ years in games, 8 years as Lead. Based LA, remote/hybrid/in house.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Unreal Engine 4/5, Niagara	Unity, Shader Graph/Forge	EmberGen, RealFlow	Maya, 3D Studio Max
After Effects, Photoshop	Claude AI making VFX tools	UE Blueprints, Vertex Anim Textures	Team Leadership & Scheduling
Shaders/Materials	Performance Optimization	Pipeline R&D	Mentorship & Feedback

KEY IMPACT

- Owned FX on 9 shipped titles** across mobile, VR, console, PC; full dev cycle experience
- Led teams of 4-8 artists** at Yager/Activision/Seismic; mentored 12 artists, 3 promoted to Senior
- Built pipeline tools** with programmers; AI Claude helped with general pipeline
- Hit 60fps budgets** on Switch/PS4: capped overdraw , draw calls , memory per effect

EXPERIENCE

Principle Effect Artist — Azra Games

July 2024 – Current · Los Angeles, CA / Remote

- Used Claude to make VFX tools one great tool Adopted by team was the particle projection shader that replaced the decals with better performance and controls
- Concept and implement realtime in-game effects for unreleased RPG using Unity + EmberGen
- Created flipbooks of explosions, smoke, and flames; built complex VFX shaders with node programming and Claude
- Delivered character FX and environmental FX under high-pressure deadlines

Principle/lead/Senior Effect Artist — Niantic Labs (Formerly Seismic Games)

July 2018 – July 2023 · Los Angeles, CA

- Ran weekly VFX dailies; mentored 2 mids to senior, unblocked performance issues on Spellslingers to hit 30fps on iPhone 8
- Shipped Spellslingers, a mobile card game, building all FX in Unity + EmberGen
- Wrote complex shaders in Shader Forge; prototyped experimental mixed reality game FX
- Collaborated across teams during Seismic → Niantic transition; maintained visual quality through pipeline shifts

Lead Effect Artist — Seismic Games

Feb 2017 – July 2018 · Los Angeles, CA

- Led FX on Blade Runner: Revelations mobile VR game using Unity + After Effects
- Created video billboards and displays in AE; defined FX pipeline for VR performance constraints.

Senior Effect Artist — Skydance Interactive / The Workshop / The Third Floor

Jan 2014 – April 2017 · Los Angeles, CA

- ArchAngle VR: Made all VFX in Unreal Engine for full game; owned performance on PSVR
- Pwnd Amazon Lumberyard GDC Demo: Real-time FX for PS4 demo under 16.7ms frame
- Suicide Squad Previs (WB): Used Unreal + AE for feature film previs
- The Evil Within (Xbox One, PS4): Built next-gen real-time FX in ID engine

Senior / Lead Effect Artist — Warner Bros Games, Yager, Activision

2004 – 2012 · Chicago, Berlin, San Mateo

- Lead/Tech direction on Mortal Kombat 9, MK vs DC, Batman: Arkham City Lockdown, Spec Ops: The Line
- Scheduled effects task lists for teams of 6-8; provided tech direction on all effect shots

- Helped develop in-house tools with programmers; adopted Unreal engine early for new-gen titles
- X-Men: The Official Game + Shrek the Third: Led FX across PS3/Xbox 360/Wii/PC/iOS; hit 30fps on Wii

Effects Animator / Lead Artist — EA, Mondo Media, Tremor, Digital Dust

2000 – 2004 · Redwood City, San Francisco, Burbank, Detroit

- Lord of the Rings: Return of the King: Real-time in-game FX and rendered cinematics
- Age of Empires III cinematics: Musket gunfire to environmental effects in Maya + Shake
- Early lead roles: taught Maya/3DS Max at College for Creative Studies; created all particle/dynamics for animated short 'Landcruising'

TOOLS & PIPELINE

Engines: Unreal 4/5, Unity, Lumberyard, ID Tech, in-house

DCC: Maya, 3DS Max, After Effects, Photoshop, Premiere, Shake, Combustion

FX: EmberGen, RealFlow, Deep Paint 3D, Niagara, Vertex Animated Textures

AI Tools: Claude AI for VFX tool development, automation, and pipeline R&D;

Code: UE Blueprints, MEL, MaxScript, XML, shader node programming

Platforms: Xbox, PS2/3/4, PC, Wii, GameCube, PSP, iOS, VR, Mobile

EDUCATION & ART

College for Creative Studies, Detroit, MI – Animation and Digital Media, 4 years

St. Clair Community College – Fine Arts, 2 years

Gallery Showings: Modern Eden (SF), Slaymaker (Chicago), Black Walnut (Chicago), Fenario (Eugene)

Runs Peoplemuver promotions/record label

Available for Principal/Lead FX roles – LA on-site or remote

kawaart.com/reel · References and shot breakdowns available upon request · Updated 2026