

SHAWN P. KAWA

Principal Realtime VFX Artist — Games

Los Angeles, CA — Open to Onsite, Hybrid, or Remote | kawa@kawaart.com | kawaart.com

Shipped titles: *Mortal Kombat 9* | *Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe* | *Spec Ops: The Line* | *The Evil Within* | *Spellslingers* | *Blade Runner: Revelations* | *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* | *Batman: Arkham City Lockdown*

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Principal Realtime VFX Artist with 23+ years in game development and 8 years in lead/principal roles, with 9 shipped AAA and mobile titles across console, PC, mobile, and VR. Leads FX teams of up to 8 artists across Unreal Engine and Unity pipelines, owning tech direction, scheduling, and pipeline R&D. Builds AI-assisted VFX tooling (using Claude) to speed up shader and pipeline development.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Unreal Engine 4/5 (Niagara, Blueprints) | Unity (Shader Graph, Shader Forge) | EmberGen | RealFlow
Maya | 3ds Max | After Effects | Photoshop | Vertex Animation Textures
Shader & Material Development | Performance Optimization | Pipeline R&D & Tool Development
Team Leadership & Scheduling | Mentorship & Feedback | AI-Assisted Workflow Development

KEY IMPACT

- Owned FX on 9 shipped titles spanning mobile, VR, console, and PC platforms across the full development cycle
- Led teams of 4–8 artists at Yager, Activision, and Seismic Games; mentored 12 artists, including 3 promoted to Senior
- Partnered with engineers to build in-house pipeline tools, incorporating AI-assisted workflows to accelerate development
- Hit 60fps performance budgets on Nintendo Switch and PS4 by managing overdraw, draw calls, and per-effect memory

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Principal Effects Artist — Azra Games

July 2024 – Present

Los Angeles, CA / Remote

- Designed and implemented realtime in-game VFX for an unreleased RPG using Unity and EmberGen
- Built a particle-projection shader system adopted studio-wide to replace decals, improving performance and artist control
- Developed complex VFX shaders and flipbook effects (explosions, smoke, fire) via node-based shader programming, using Claude to accelerate tool development
- Delivered character and environmental FX under tight production deadlines

Principal / Lead / Senior Effects Artist — Niantic Labs (formerly Seismic Games)

July 2018 – July 2023

Los Angeles, CA

- Shipped *Spellslingers*, a mobile card game, building all FX in Unity and EmberGen
- Ran weekly VFX dailies; mentored 2 mid-level artists to Senior; resolved performance issues to hit 30fps on iPhone 8
- Wrote complex shaders in Shader Forge; prototyped experimental FX for mixed-reality projects
- Maintained visual quality and team continuity through the Seismic-to-Niantic transition

Lead Effects Artist — Seismic Games

Feb 2017 – July 2018

Los Angeles, CA

- Led FX on *Blade Runner: Revelations*, a mobile VR title, using Unity and After Effects
- Created video billboards and in-game displays in After Effects; defined the FX pipeline for VR performance constraints

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

Jan 2014 – April 2017

Los Angeles, CA

- Archangel (VR): Built all VFX in Unreal Engine; owned performance for the full PSVR title

- Amazon Lumberyard GDC Demo: Created realtime FX for a PS4 demo, hitting a 16.7ms frame budget
- Suicide Squad (Warner Bros.) Previs: Delivered feature-film previs FX using Unreal Engine and After Effects
- The Evil Within (Xbox One, PS4): Built next-gen realtime FX in id Tech

Senior / Lead Effects Artist — Warner Bros. Games, Yager, Activision

2004 – 2012

Chicago, IL / Berlin, Germany / San Mateo, CA

- Provided lead tech direction on Mortal Kombat 9, Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe, Batman: Arkham City Lockdown, and Spec Ops: The Line
- Scheduled effects task lists and provided tech direction for teams of 6–8 artists
- Partnered with engineers to build in-house pipeline tools; an early adopter of Unreal Engine for next-gen titles
- Led FX across PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PC, and iOS for X-Men: The Official Game and Shrek the Third; hit 30fps on Wii

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

2000 – 2004

Redwood City, CA / San Francisco, CA / Burbank, CA / Detroit, MI

- The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King: Built realtime in-game FX and rendered cinematics
- Age of Empires III: Created cinematic effects, from musket fire to environmental atmosphere, in Maya and Shake
- Taught Maya and 3ds Max at the College for Creative Studies; created all particle and dynamics FX for the animated short "Landcruising"

TOOLS & PIPELINE

Engines: Unreal Engine 4/5, Unity, Lumberyard, id Tech, in-house engines

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

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

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

AI Tools: Claude (VFX tool development, automation, pipeline R&D)

Platforms: Xbox, PlayStation 2/3/4, PC, Wii, GameCube, PSP, iOS, VR, Mobile

EDUCATION

College for Creative Studies, Detroit, MI — Animation and Digital Media (4 years)

St. Clair County Community College — Fine Arts (2 years)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

References and shot breakdowns available upon request.