

# Tad Ander Leckman

tadleckman.com

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Director of Learning and Development; Dean of Level Up U

Activision|Blizzard / MAR 2022 - SEP 2024

Responsible for “craft” learning and development for video game developers across all Activision, Blizzard and King studios. Craft learning includes hard-skills and software training, as well as foundation and theory, for a broad spectrum of engineering, art and game design disciplines. Mentor in-house experts to design and teach long-form courses, short workshops and one-off talks. Advise studio leadership and studio-based learning and development teams at Blizzard, Activision and King. Advise Early Careers, Inclusive Game Design, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Studio Culture, and Central Tech teams.

Dean of *Level Up U* program: responsible for the leadership, design and delivery of Activision|Blizzard’s award-winning *Level Up U Program*, whose mission is: “To create opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to enter the game industry.” The first cohort of Level Up U was made up of 104 diverse, experienced engineers with little or no exposure to game development, but a passion for games. Over the course of the 12-week program, engineers received supplemental programming instruction, an introduction to programming for game engines, insight into inclusive game design practices, and an overview of the game development process. For the program’s two-week capstone project, engineers created a unique game mode using the proprietary *Call of Duty* engine and tools. All 104 engineers completed the program and were placed into full-time roles on teams working on *World of Warcraft*, *Diablo IV*, *Hearthstone*, *Overwatch*, *Call of Duty*, *Call of Duty Mobile*, *Ricochet* anti-cheat technology, and multiple research and development projects.

### Lecturer, Computer Science: Computer Game Design, Art and Design, Games and Playable Media, and Digital Arts and New Media programs

University of California, Santa Cruz / JANUARY 2019 - MARCH 2022

Teach undergraduate and graduate courses, hold professional development workshops, moderate career panels, advise students, write letters of recommendation, facilitate annual student feedback *post mortem* sessions, manage and mentor graduate Teaching Assistants, manage the annual, three-day, UCSC Games Showcase event, including recruiting industry judges for annual student awards.

Courses Taught: *Foundations of Video Game Design*, *Game Systems*, *Game Design Studio I*, *Game Design Studio II*, *Game Design Studio III*, *Adventure Design*, *Digital Enhancements for Tabletop Games*, *Critical Gameplay*, *Game-Based VR Learning*, *Game Design Experience*, *Foundations of Play*, *Camera and Lighting for Video Game Designers*, *Professional Development for the Arts*

### Consultant

Accenture Global Learning Ingenuity Team / JULY 2021 – SEPTEMBER 2021

Partnered with Accenture's Learning Ingenuity team to identify and define projects to take advantage of VR and playable learning solutions. Consulted on the development of pilot for VR-based feedback training, including narrative structure and development workflow.

### Consultant

Accenture Global Learning Ingenuity Team / SEPTEMBER 2019

Researched and wrote an internal “Point of View” document which outlined various approaches to developing games for use in remote and in-person learning and development. Collaborated with a multi-discipline team to design game-based, remote leadership training modules for a class of rising 2020 global leaders within Accenture.

**Adjunct Professor**

Academy of Art University / SEPTEMBER 2018 – DECEMBER 2018

Courses Taught: *Introduction to Game Development*, *Game Cinematics*, and *Introduction to Computer Graphics for Animation*.

**Visiting Assistant Professor, Art and Design, Games and Playable Media, and Digital Arts and New Media programs**

University of California, Santa Cruz / JULY 2017 – JULY 2018

Taught undergraduate and graduate courses, held professional development workshops, and advised students.

Courses Taught: *Game Design Studio I*, *Game Design Studio II*, *Game Design Studio III*, *Camera and Lighting for Game Developers*, *Professional Development for the Arts*.

**Special Program Development, Arts Division**

University of California, Santa Cruz / FEBRUARY 2017 – JUNE 2017

Developed an initial plan, curriculum and framework for a Creative Entrepreneurship Initiative including the Creative Entrepreneurship Internship. Partnered with California entertainment companies, creative nonprofits and public institutions with the goal of placing UCSC students in meaningful internships and connecting them with professional mentors.

**Academic Consultant**

Program review and curriculum development / OCTOBER 2016 – FEBRUARY 2017

Clients include: Lawrence and Kristina Dodge College of Film and Media Arts at Chapman University, Academy of Art University's School of Animation & Visual Effects, and Luma Pictures

**Director of Art Education**

Riot Games / FEBRUARY 2015 – AUGUST 2016

Responsible for learning and development for Riot's 150+ artists and writers. Established and managed a craft-education program for Riot's Art and Narrative disciplines and collaborated on the creation and teaching of Riot's Art Leadership Academy. Mentored and advised studio artists interested in teaching classes. Established and programmed Creative Speaker Series, featuring monthly presentations by leading artists and storytellers from across the entertainment industry. Created Riot's Visiting Artist Program, embedding industry-leading artists and writers from outside of games onto teams to mentor and teach for 4-6 weeks. Managed and mentored Riot's Art Archivist and guided the development of Riot's Art Archive, Lore Database and online art sharing/feedback tools. Key stakeholder in development of Riot Learning Hub, a proprietary learning management and publishing system. Member of interview committees for recruiting mid to senior-level roles across the studio.

Games in Development: *League of Legends*, *Mechs vs. Minions*, and various research and development projects

## **Senior Training Manager, Cinematics**

Blizzard Entertainment / JANUARY 2013 – JANUARY 2015

Supervised all aspects of training for Blizzard's Cinematics and Creative Development teams, including art, narrative and engineering. Responsible for creation of the Cinematics Story Initiative to encourage a culture of storytelling and to develop potential new animated short, episodic and publishing content. Consulted with Blizzard game development teams to create training solutions for onboarding, cross-training and enrichment. Facilitated *post mortems*, scheduled "/learn" speaker series, and taught classes for both cinematics and game development teams.

Games in Development: *World of Warcraft: Warlords of Draenor*, *Diablo III: Reaper of Souls*, *StarCraft II: Legacy of the Void*, *Heroes of the Storm*, *Overwatch*

## **Adjunct Professor**

Academy of Art University / SEPTEMBER 2011 – JUNE 2013

Courses Taught: Graduate MFA thesis development courses

## **Academic Consultant**

Florida State University in partnership with Digital Domain Institute / JANUARY 2012 – SEPTEMBER 2012

Developed program, curricula and classroom requirements for a new Animation and Digital Media BFA. Worked directly with Digital Domain, visual effects and animation studio, to design hands-on internship and apprenticeship programs tied directly to both classroom learning and meaningful work on feature animation projects.

## **Academic Director**

Escape Studios Visual Effects Academy, Santa Monica / JANUARY 2011 – JANUARY 2012

Worked with Europe's premiere visual effects school to bring their successful, industry-focused programs to Santa Monica. Recruited instructors, developed 3D and 2D curriculum, supervised technical classroom design and build-out and outreach to studios and universities.

## **Director of Training**

Lucasfilm Singapore / JANUARY 2008 – NOVEMBER 2010

As a member of studio senior staff, supervised all aspects of training for an integrated animation, visual effects and game development studio as it grew from 250 to 500+ employees. Development and administration of the studio's *Jedi Masters Program*, which provided a structured apprenticeship to prepare recent graduates for entry-level positions as animators, effects artists, modelers, lighters, riggers, and compositors. The program also prepared artists to transition from television animation work (*Clone Wars*), to positions working on live-action visual effects (*Iron Man*, *Star Trek*, *Transformers*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and *Terminator Salvation*) feature animation (*Rango* and *Strange Magic*) and console/handheld games (*The Force Unleashed*, *The Force Unleashed 2*, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars – Republic Heroes* and *The Secret of Monkey Island: Special Edition*). Supervised all internal training for artistic and engineering staff and the creation of the *Jedi Academy* internship program. Created and presented quarterly reports for the Singapore Economic Development Board, and annual reports for the Lucasfilm Board of Directors. Position required regular consultation with The Ministry of Education, Media Development Authority and various colleges and universities in Singapore to better prepare students for careers in creative industries.

## **Chair of Visual Effects Program**

Savannah College of Art and Design - School of Film and Digital Media / MARCH 2006 – DECEMBER 2007

Supervised visual effects faculty of eight professors, oversaw all curriculum development for BFA, MA and MFA degree programs and oversight of visual effects equipment and resources including labs, motion-capture stage, green screen stage and render farm and taught visual effects courses. Oversaw program review and accreditation by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Courses Taught: *Previsualization and 3D Layout, Preproduction, Visual Effects Cinematography, Survey of Visual Effects, Practical Visual Effects Modelmaking, Visual Effects Concept Development, Visual Effects Studio I, Visual Effects Studio II, Visual Effects Portfolio.*

## **Lead Professor and Preproduction and Student Portfolio Course Manager**

Academy of Art University - School of Animation and Visual Effects / SEPTEMBER 2002 – FEBRUARY 2006

Developed and taught all preproduction and foundation courses for BFA, MA and MFA degree programs within the School of Animation and Visual Effects, which served nearly 1000 students and employed 20-30 instructors. Developed and taught a variety of visual effects and animation courses. Responsible for the restructuring of portfolio courses to better prepare students for careers in animation, game development and visual effects.

Courses Taught: *Previsualization and 3D Layout, Preproduction Principles, Spaceship Design and Construction, Visual Effects Collaborative Project, History of Visual Effects, Introduction to Computer Graphics, Careers in Digital Production, Short-Form Narrative, MFA Thesis Preproduction, Introduction to Digital Compositing, Visual Effects Cinematography, Senior Digital Portfolio.*

Online Courses Developed: *Introduction to Computer Graphics, Careers in Digital Production and Preproduction Principles.*

## **Instructor, *Making a Digital Movie* course**

New York University Center for Advanced Digital Applications / SUMMER 2000 and SUMMER 2001

Created and taught an intensive, three-week course for NYU. Exposed students to the entire process of digital filmmaking including story development, pre-production, production, visual effects and editing. Students created a short, live-action film with extensive visual effects, entirely from scratch, using digital video cameras, a portable editing system, and the university's SGI production labs.

## **Previsualization Supervisor/Lead Animatic Artist**

Industrial Light & Magic, Art Department / JULY 1998 - SEPTEMBER 2002

Developed and managed the previsualization process at ILM for both live-action features and digital animated features, including staffing, scheduling and management of artists and oversight of custom tool development and pipeline integration. Worked with visual effects producers and supervisors to bid incoming projects. Created 2D and 3D animatics used to pre-visualize sequences, including 3D modeling, texturing, rigging, animation, compositing, editing, art direction and production design.

Productions: *Peter Pan, Van Helsing, The Incredible Hulk, Terminator 3, Dreamcatcher, Gangs of New York, K-19: The Widowmaker, Minority Report, Men In Black 2, Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones, Imposter, The Majestic, The Time Machine, Big Trouble, Planet of the Apes, The Mummy Returns, A.I., The Pledge, Space Cowboys, Galaxy Quest, Frankenstein (unproduced ILM/Universal digital animated feature), and various commercials.*

## **Digital Concept Artist**

Industrial Light & Magic, Art Department / JANUARY 1998 – JULY 1998

Responsible for digital character, costume and concept design and research as well as creating animatics and editing pitch reels.

Productions: *XO* (unproduced ILM/Dreamworks digital animated feature), *The Mummy*, *Superman Lives* (unproduced Warner Brothers feature).

## **Production Manager and Pipeline Architect, Rebel Mac Unit**

Industrial Light & Magic, Computer Graphics Department / JUNE 1996 – DECEMBER 1997

Created and managed an alternative digital production team that used off-the-shelf software and consumer hardware to provide productions with integrated, modeling, texturing, animation and compositing services for live-action visual effects. Day-to-day management of artists, project planning and documentation, pipeline architecture, integration and technology oversight.

Productions: *Star Trek: First Contact*, *Star Wars Trilogy: Special Edition*, *Men in Black*, *Star Wars: the Phantom Menace* and various commercial productions.

## **Manager of Desktop Support Systems/Macintosh System Administrator**

Industrial Light & Magic, Computer Systems Engineering / MAY 1995 – JUNE 1996

## **ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Publications**

*Teaching the Game: An Interdisciplinary Collection of Game Syllabi* (2021, ETC Press) - Primary chapter author with Noah Wardrip-Fruin

### **Lectures and Speaking Engagements**

Kingfo Market, Activision Studio Summit, SIGGRAPH, SIGGRAPH Asia, Brooklyn Art Museum, Tribeca Games, *The Learning Geeks Podcast*, , *Academy of International Extended Reality podcast*, AnimFX/NZ, CG Overdrive, Games Asia, Seoul International Animation and Cartoon Festival, CTN Expo, LSU, LMU, CalArts, DigiPen, Chapman University, Laguna College of Art and Design, Gnomon School of Visual Effects, Games & Animation, Savannah Film Festival, VES Festival of Visual Effects, National Youth Leadership Forum on Technology, Port Townsend Film Festival, QuickTime Live

### **Industry Organizations**

Women in Animation (past Chair, Bay Area Student Committee and past Co-Chair, Programming Committee), The International Game Developers Association, ACM SIGGRAPH, Previsualization Society, The International Animated Film Society

### **Education**

University of California Santa Cruz Bachelor of Arts Degree with Honors in English/American Literature

Master of Fine Arts equivalency justification granted by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in 2006