

Open Source Physically Based Rendering with appleseed



François Beaune
Project Founder

A close-up photograph of a dog's face, likely a golden retriever or similar breed, looking slightly to the right. The dog has a warm, golden-brown coat. The background is a vibrant, abstract mix of yellow, green, blue, and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the top right corner, there is a white rectangular box containing the word "Fetch" in a black, sans-serif font.

Fetch

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- Open source rendering engine
- Designed for **VFX** and **animation**
- Targeted at individuals and small studios

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- Started in June 2009
- Small, professional team
- Not our main job

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- Pure CPU renderer
- Unidirectional path tracing
- Physically-based
- Highly programmable

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LIGHT TRANSPORT

- Distributed Ray Tracing
- Unidirectional Path Tracing
- Stochastic Progressive Photon Mapping
- Light Tracing

RENDERING MODES

- Multi-pass rendering
- Progressive rendering
- Interactive rendering
- Scene editing during rendering
- Spectral rendering (31 bands)**
- RGB rendering
- Automatic spectral / RGB switching

CAMERA MODELS

- Pinhole camera
- Spherical camera
- Thin lens camera (depth of field)
- Polygonal diaphragm shapes
- Image-based diaphragm shapes

LIGHT SOURCE MODELS

- Point light
- Spot light
- Gobos

- Directional/parallel light
- Mesh light
- Purely diffuse emission profile
- Cone-shaped emission profile
- Image-based lighting
- Latitude-longitude environment maps
- Mirror-ball environment maps
- Preetham physically-based day sky
- Hosek & Wilkie physically-based day sky
- Physically-based sun

REFLECTION MODELS

- Lambertian BRDF (purely diffuse)
- Specular BRDF (perfect mirror)
- Specular BTDF (clear glass)
- Oren-Nayar Microfacet BRDF
- Ward Microfacet BRDF
- Blinn Microfacet BRDF
- GGX Microfacet BRDF
- Microfacet BTDF (rough glass)
- Anisotropic Ashikhmin-Shirley BRDF
- Kelemen BRDF
- Disney's Layered BRDF**
- Arbitrary mixture of BRDFs

MOTION BLUR

- Camera motion blur
- Transformation motion blur
- Deformation motion blur
- Arbitrarily number of motion steps

PRODUCTION FEATURES

- Open Shading Language**
- OSL shader library
- Disney's SeExpr expressions**
- Rule-based render layers
- Hierarchical instancing
- Per-instance visibility flags
- Alpha mapping
- Automatic color space conversions
- Ray bias
- Light Near Start
- Max Ray Intensity
- Dozens of diagnostic modes

INTEROPERABILITY

- Windows, Linux and OS X (64-bit)
- OBJ, Alembic, BinaryMesh (proprietary)
- OpenEXR, PNG
- OSL shaders

Gaffer integration

- Maya integration
- Blender integration

HACKABILITY

- Fully open source, MIT license
- Very clean code
- CMake build system
- Full featured C++ API
- Full featured Python 2.x/3.x API
- More than 1200 built-in unit tests
- Hundreds of built-in performance tests
- Rich, automatic functional test suite

PERFORMANCE

- Multithreaded, scalable
- SSE / SSE2 vectorization
- Memory-bounded texture cache
- Multiple Importance Sampling
- Efficient handling of alpha maps

TOOLS

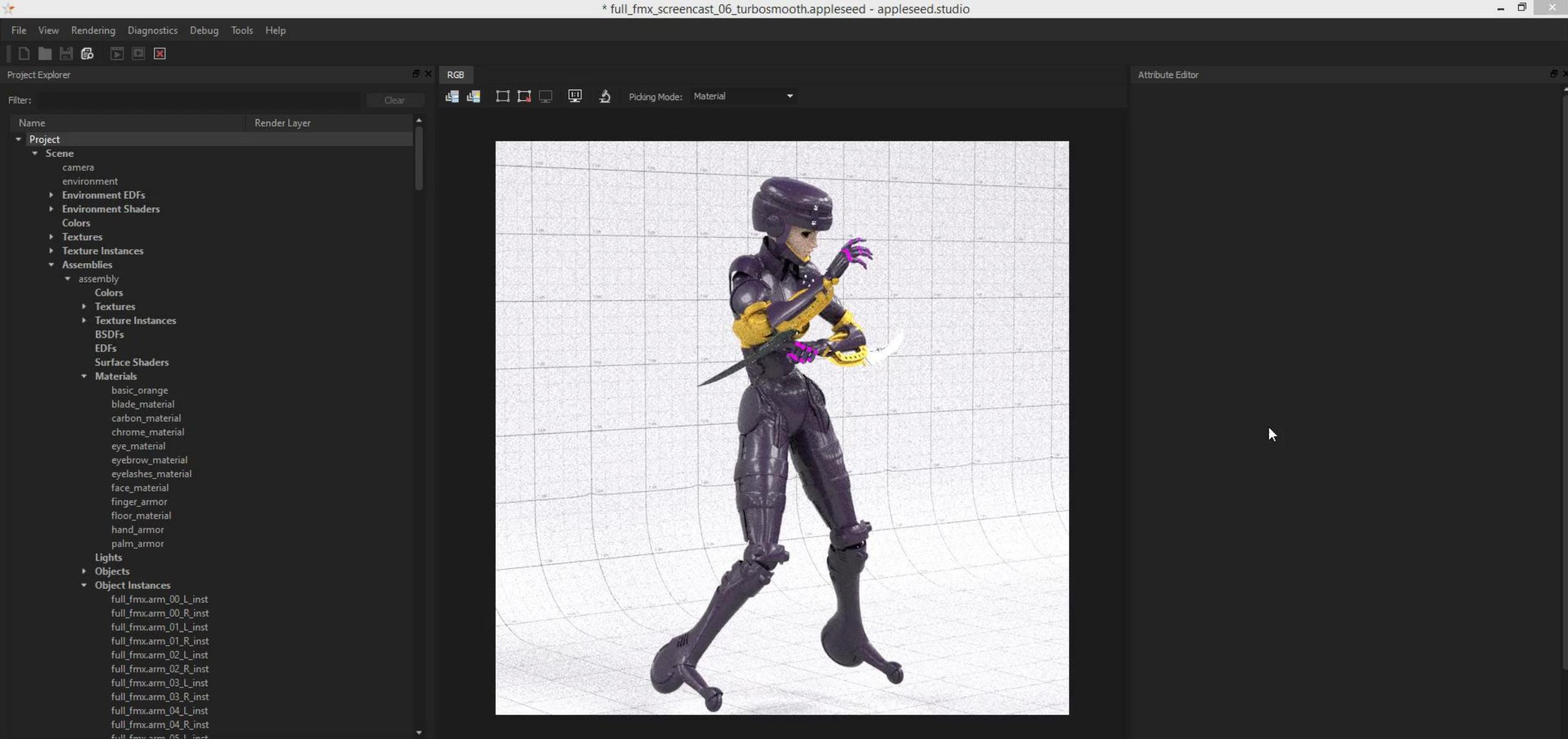
- Graphical tool for scene edition
- Command line renderer
- Dropbox-based render farm tools
- OSL compiler and tools





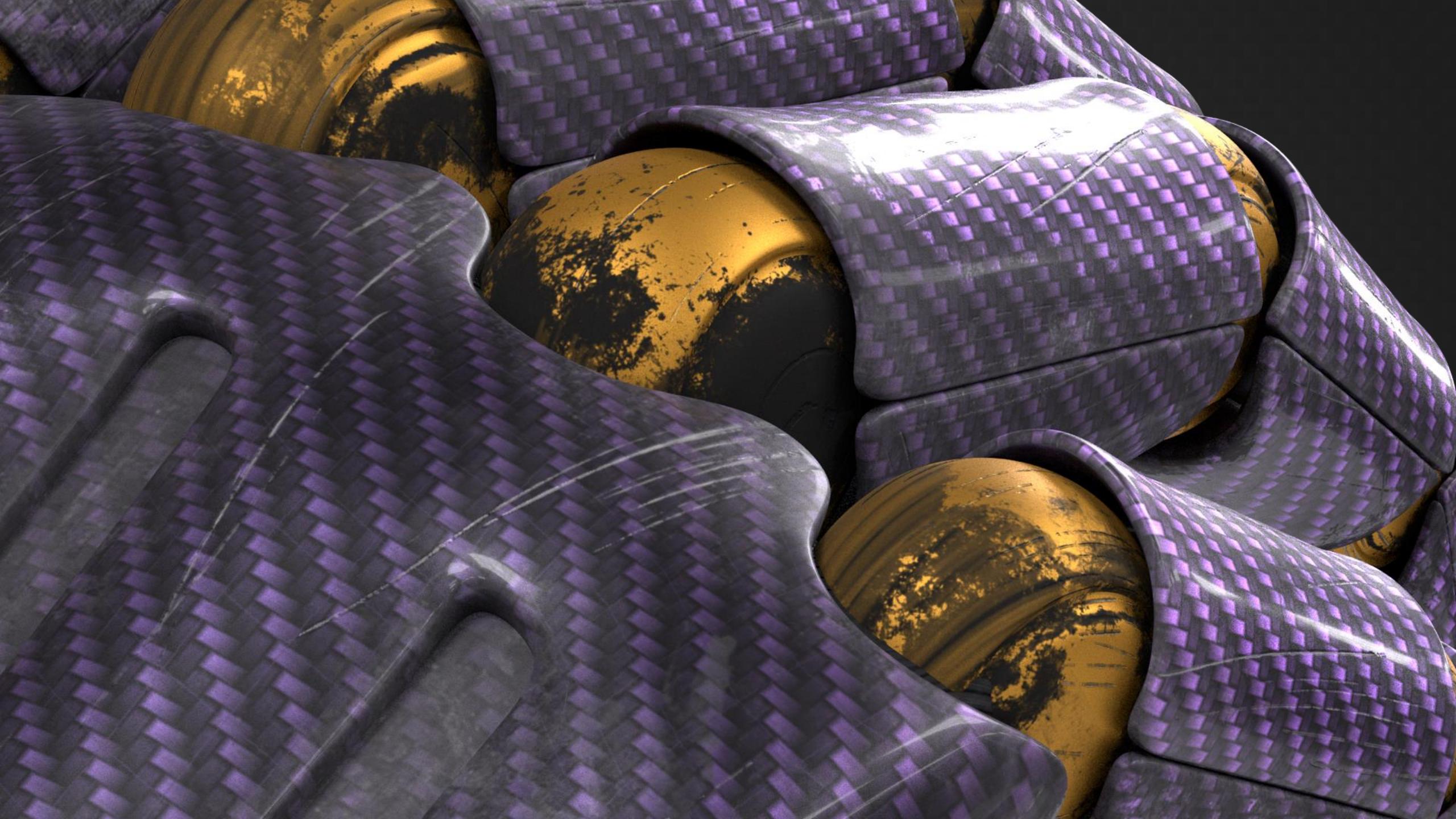
71.8 million triangles
2.4 GB of textures
Disney layered BRDFs
SeExpr expressions
Image-based lighting
Depth of field

Average workstation
Intel Core-i7 5820K (6-core)
16 GB of RAM



Log

```
2015-05-01T12:31:02.1832672 <174> 17866 MB info | 2,007,040 samples, 4.1 samples/pixel, 661,298 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:03.1832662 <174> 17866 MB info | 2,695,168 samples, 5.5 samples/pixel, 667,947 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:04.1831862 <174> 17866 MB info | 3,481,600 samples, 7.1 samples/pixel, 691,479 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:05.1881512 <174> 17866 MB info | 4,366,336 samples, 8.9 samples/pixel, 722,903 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:06.2241452 <174> 17866 MB info | 5,103,616 samples, 10.4 samples/pixel, 724,945 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:07.2291092 <174> 17866 MB info | 5,709,824 samples, 11.7 samples/pixel, 707,011 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:08.2310712 <174> 17866 MB info | 6,430,720 samples, 13.1 samples/pixel, 708,151 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:09.2860842 <174> 17866 MB info | 7,610,368 samples, 15.5 samples/pixel, 754,772 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:10.3801342 <174> 17867 MB info | 8,142,848 samples, 16.6 samples/pixel, 731,087 samples/second
2015-05-01T12:31:11.3800942 <174> 17867 MB info | 8,888,320 samples, 18.1 samples/pixel, 726,644 samples/second
```





appleseed

- Modern
 - Interactive
 - Single pass
 - Tessellation-free
 - Flicker-free

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- Reliable
 - Avoid (bad) surprises
 - Avoid crashes
 - Avoid regressions
 - Value correctness
 - Incremental change = incremental effect

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- Flexible
 - Avoid arbitrary limitations
 - Provide tons of public extension points
 - Maximize programmability
 - OpenShadingLanguage
 - Disney's SeExpr
 - Full C++ API
 - Full Python 2.x / 3.x API

appleseed

- Hackable
 - Fully open source
 - Liberal license (MIT) from the start
 - Everything hosted on GitHub
 - Development fully in the open
 - Using only open source or free tools
 - Welcoming, helpful, mature community

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Team & Process



François Beaune



Esteban Tovagliari



François Gilliot



Jonathan Topf



Hans Hoogenboom



Joel Daniels



Dorian Fevrier



Haggi Krey



Srinath Ravichandran



Marius Avram

R&D



François Beaune



Esteban Tovagliari

GSOC '14 Students

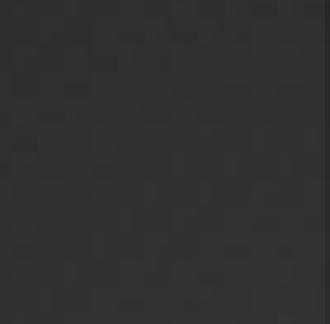


Srinath Ravichandran

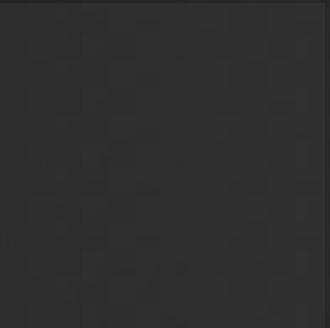


Marius Avram

Exporters & Integrations



Esteban Tovagliari



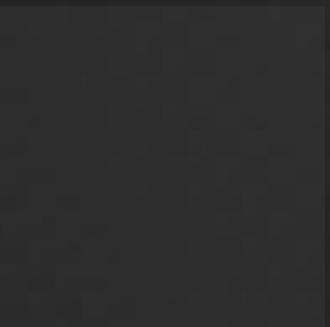
Jonathan Topf



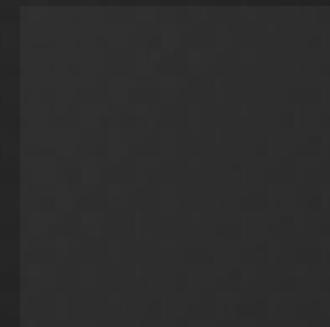
Hans Hoogenboom



Joel Daniels



Haggi Krey



Fetch



François Beaune



François Gilliot



Jonathan Topf

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- Core practices and values
 - Collective code ownership
 - Continuous refactoring
 - Pull requests reviews
 - Unit tests
 - End-to-end tests
 - Performance regression tests

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Selected Works



Light & Dark (BBC Four Documentary)



Light & Dark (BBC Four Documentary)

Character designs by appleseed users





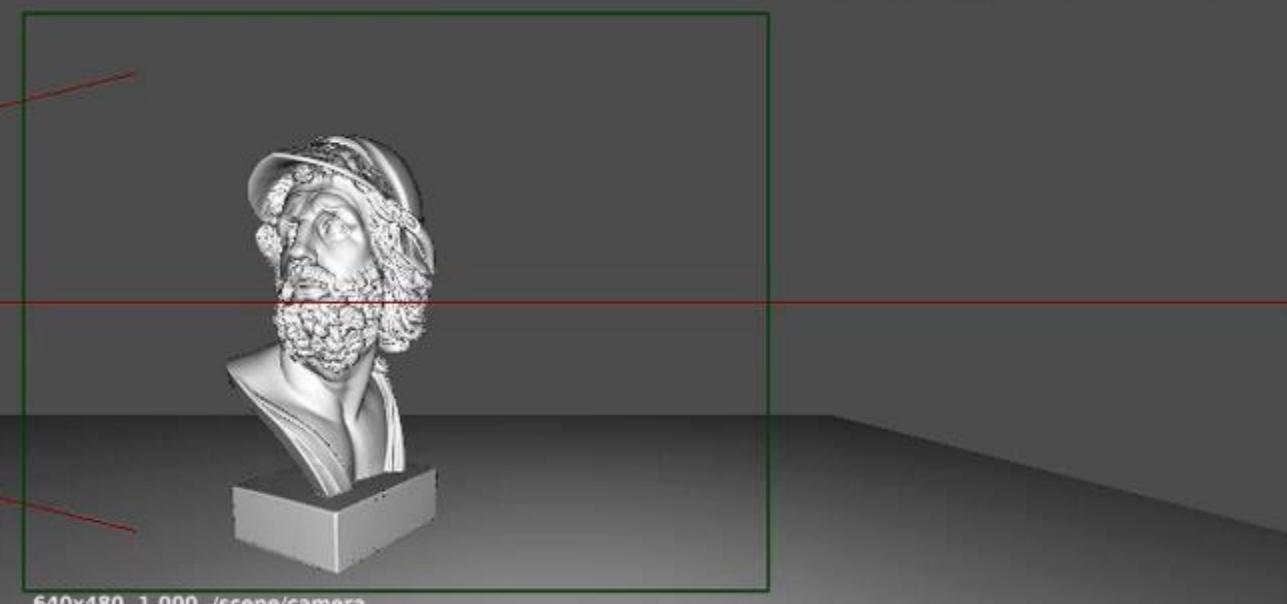
Fetch, a very short film



Fetch, a very short film

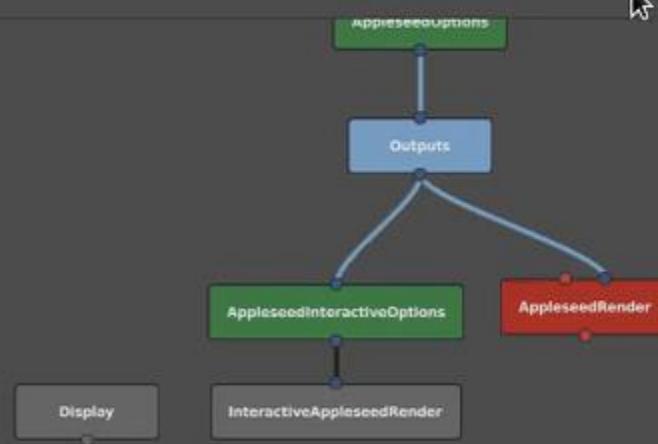
appleseed

appleseed now fully integrated into Image Engine's Gaffer



640x480, 1.000, /scene/camera

Node Graph



Node Editor : Outputs

Scene Inspector : Outputs

1

| Name | Interactive/Beauty |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| File Name | beauty |
| Type | ieDisplay |
| Data | rgba |
| displayHost | localhost |
| remoteDisplayType | GafferImage::GafferDisplayDriver |
| quantize | Float |
| displayPort | 1559 |
| driverType | ClientDisplayDriver |

Scene Hierarchy : Outputs Script Editor Node Editor : Inte

Code Name InteractiveAppleseedRender InteractiveAppleseedRender i

| Setting | Value |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| State | Stopped ▾ |
| Update Lights | ✓ |
| Update Attributes | ✓ |
| Update Cameras | ✓ |
| Update Coordinate Systems | ✗ |

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Welcoming contributions!

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Home

<http://appleseedhq.net/>

GitHub

<https://github.com/appleseedhq/appleseed>

Development Mailing List

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/appleseed-dev>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/appleseedhq>



Making Fetch

Making Fetch

- Initiated “Project Mescaline” in June 2012
- Goals:
 - Test & validate appleseed on a small production
 - Showcase & promote appleseed
 - Sharpen our skills
 - Have fun with friends
- Constraints:
 - Final render 100% appleseed
 - Tiny budget

Making Fetch

- Small team:
 - 1 for direction & art
 - 1 for pipeline & render
 - 1 for sound effects & soundtrack (late in project)
 - Help from friends
- Strictly free-time / rainy days project
- Effort:
 - Planned: 8 months
 - Actual: 19 months ☺

Making Fetch

- “Fetch, a very short film”
- 2 minutes hand-animated short
- Targeted at kids
- Miniature look
- Fully rendered with appleseed

Making Fetch

- Pipeline
- Render Setup
- Render Farm
- Conclusion

Making Fetch

Pipeline

Making Fetch – Pipeline

- Modeling, animation, lookdev in 3ds Max
 - Tool of choice for the artist
- Lookdev mostly with V-Ray
 - Integrated in 3ds Max

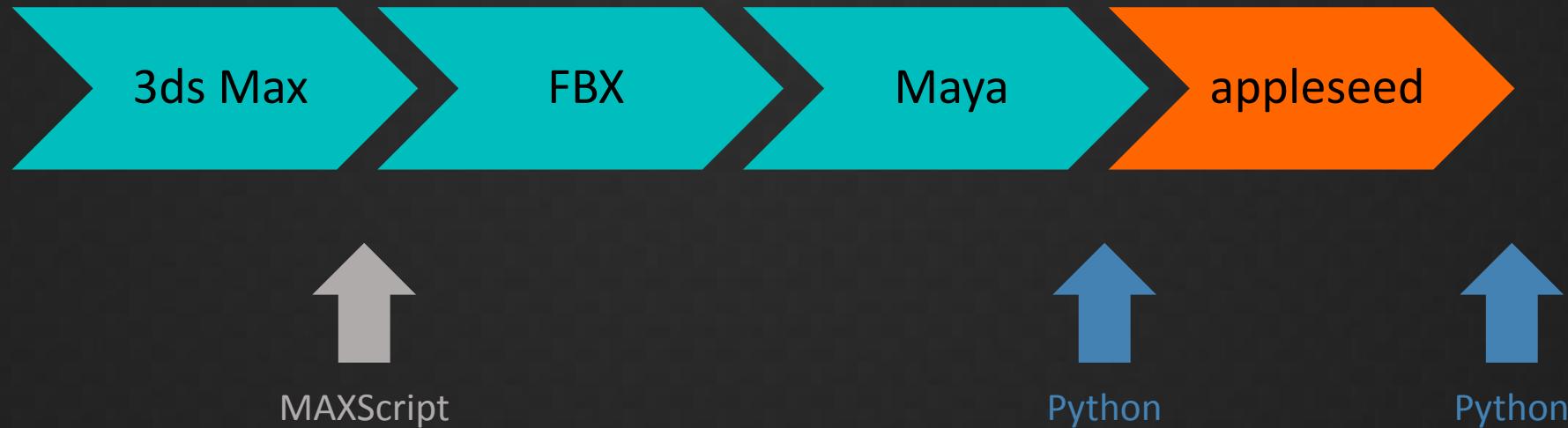
Making Fetch – Pipeline

- Problem: no 3ds Max-to-appleseed exporter
- Writing a full-featured exporter for 3ds Max too big of a project
- Solution:



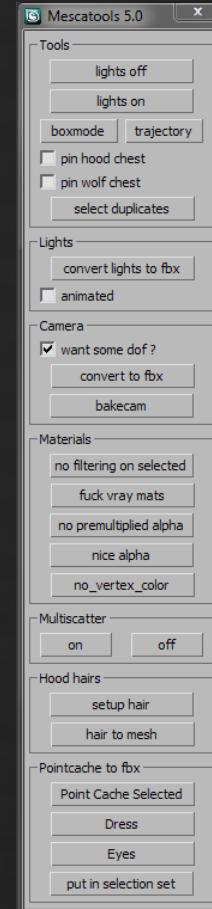
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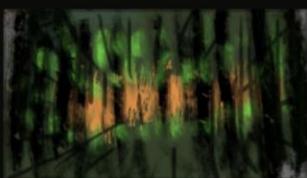
Making Fetch – Pipeline

- FBX format would lose lots of information
 - Area lights
 - Gobos
 - DOF parameters...
- Several custom scripts to remedy this
 - 3ds Max side (MAXScript)
 - Store various info into custom attributes
 - Prepare the scene before FBX export
 - Maya side (Python)
 - Retrieve info from custom attributes
 - Adjust materials



Making Fetch – Pipeline

- Initial lookdev mostly with V-Ray 3
- Materials translated to appleseed
 - Automatic translation during export
 - Lots of post-export tweaks
 - Automatic tweaks via Python scripts



Making Fetch

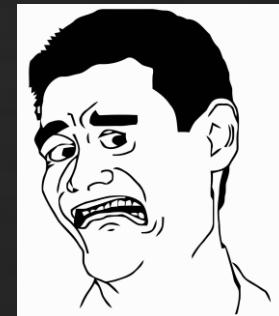
Render Setup

Making Fetch – Render Setup

- Art direction called for:
 - Miniature look = realistic lighting + shallow DOF
 - Mostly forest shots with almost no direct illumination
 - Millions of grass blades and tree leaves in nearly every shot
 - All translucent (thin translucency)
 - All using alpha cutouts
 - Image-based lighting in 25% of the shots
 - Many scenes with really strong motion
 - Transformation and deformation

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Making Fetch – Render Setup

- Physically-based materials & lighting
- Unidirectional path tracing, 2 bounces
- 64-400 samples/pixel depending on DOF and MB
- Single pass, no baking whatsoever
- One AOV per light (4-6 lights per shot)
- Plus a few special AOVs
 - Girl's hair
 - Wolf's eyes...

Making Fetch – Render Setup

- Full HD resolution (1920x1080)
- 24 frames/second
- 2767 frames (~ 115 seconds)

Making Fetch – Render Setup

- 3120 individual scenes to render
 - 2767 frames + a couple backgrounds rendered separately
- 32 GB of final render data
 - OpenEXR textures (RLE-compressed)
 - Proprietary geometry format (LZ4-compressed)
- Tens of thousands of files



Making Fetch

Render Farm

Making Fetch – Render Farm

- Obviously too much work for one or even a couple machines
- No money meant:
 - Not buying additional machines
 - Not renting a render farm
 - Not paying for Amazon Web Services
- So?

Making Fetch – Render Farm

- Friends to the rescue!
- Challenges:
 - 32 shots, tens of thousands of files, GB of data
 - Friends all around the place in Europe
 - Random machines
 - Random OS
 - Machines only available occasionally
 - Many machines behind firewall / NAT
 - No technical expertise or rendering experience for most of them

Making Fetch – Render Farm

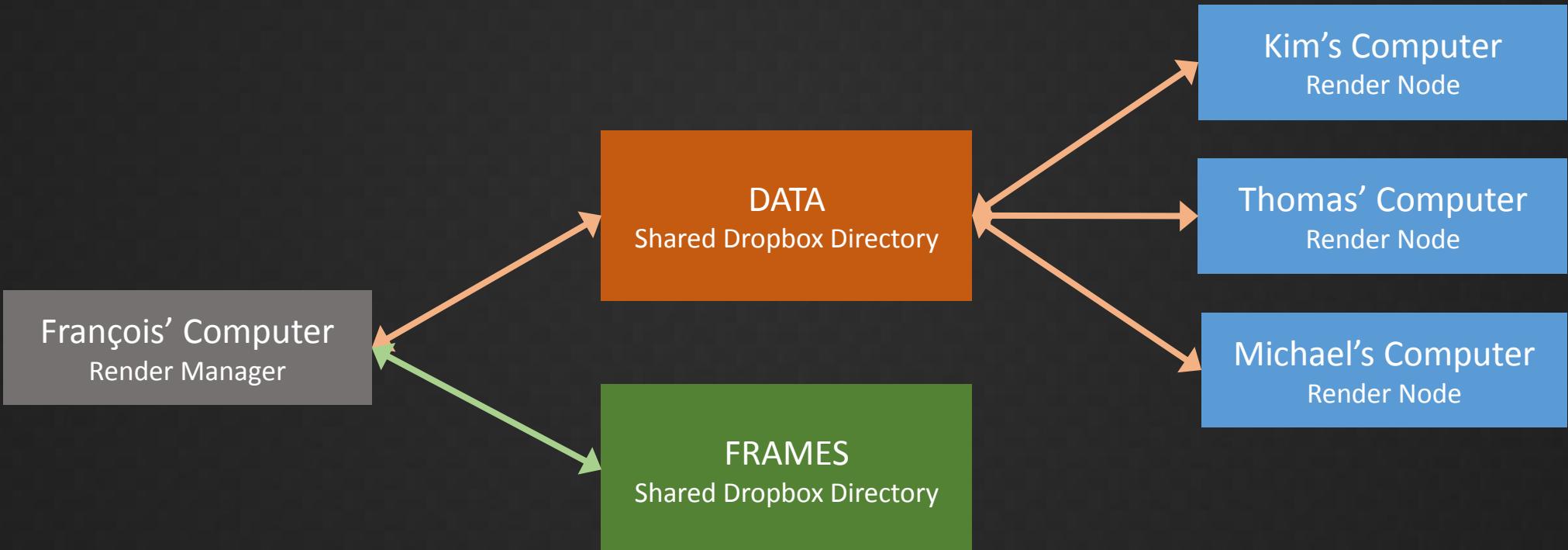
Solution:

DYI render farm based on Dropbox

Making Fetch – Render Farm

Use Dropbox as **delivery channel**,
and for **command & control**

Making Fetch – Render Farm



Making Fetch – Render Farm

DATA

Shared Dropbox Directory

- Shared directory
- Assume Dropbox Basic accounts (free!) = 2 GB
- Hosts:
 - appleseed binaries for Windows, Linux and OS X
 - Data for one or multiple partial shots

Making Fetch – Render Farm

- Shared directory on Dropbox Pro accounts
- Hosts all rendered frames
 - Ended up with 140 GB worth of OpenEXR files
- Only shared between team members

FRAMES

Shared Dropbox Directory

Making Fetch – Render Farm

- A variety of 64-bit machines
 - Windows Vista, 7, 8
 - Linux
 - OS X
- Mostly quad core machines
- Typically available nights and week-ends
- Render nodes run the render node script
- Users free to kill render node script at any time

Kim's Computer
Render Node

Thomas' Computer
Render Node

Michael's Computer
Render Node

Making Fetch – Render Farm

- Render nodes run a Python script:

Loop:

“Acquire” scene by appending a per-machine suffix to scene file

Render scene

Move rendered frame files to “frames” subdirectory in **DATA**

Move rendered scene file to “archive” subdirectory in **DATA**

Making Fetch – Render Farm

François' Computer
Render Manager

- Underpowered Core i5 laptop
- Managing rendering:
 - Upload/remove shot data as required
 - Honor 2 GB size limitation of **DATA** at all times
 - Move rendered frames from **DATA** to **FRAMES**
 - Monitor and print render farm health, activity and progress
- Running 24/7

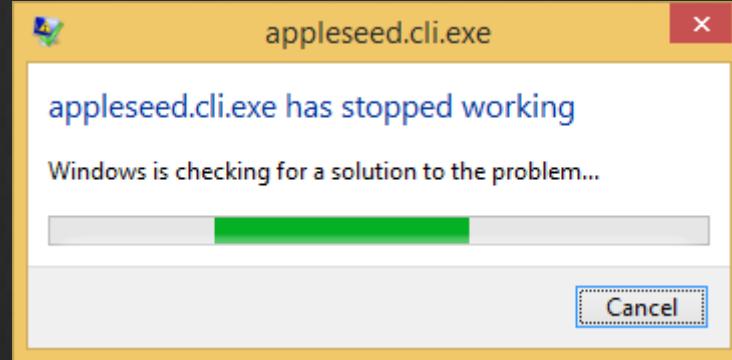
```
C:\ Term --max-size 1536 --source . --target "c:\franz\Dropbox\Render Farm 1\data" --frames "c:\franz\Dropbox\Project Mescaline\final frames\36_28_00"
2014-01-16 18:34:22.405000 mgr  info | --- starting logging ---
2014-01-16 18:34:22.406000 mgr  info | running rendermanager.py version 2.4.
2014-01-16 18:34:22.937000 mgr  info | gathering files...
2014-01-16 18:34:22.946000 mgr  info | found 280 source files in .
2014-01-16 18:34:22.946000 mgr  info | found 25 completed files (all shots) in c:\franz\Dropbox\Render Farm 1\data\_archives
2014-01-16 18:34:22.947000 mgr  info | found 8 in-progress files (all shots) in c:\franz\Dropbox\Render Farm 1\data
2014-01-16 18:34:22.947000 mgr  info | found 67 uploaded files (all shots) in c:\franz\Dropbox\Render Farm 1\data
2014-01-16 18:34:22.947000 mgr  info |
2014-01-16 18:34:22.949000 mgr  info | PROGRESS: 25/280 completed (8.93 %), 8 rendering, 247 pending
2014-01-16 18:34:22.951000 mgr  info | frame assignments:
2014-01-16 18:34:22.951000 mgr  info |     36_28_00.0058.appleseed: ku
2014-01-16 18:34:22.951000 mgr  info |     36_28_00.0071.appleseed: yd_daesign
2014-01-16 18:34:22.952000 mgr  info |     36_28_00.0010.appleseed: ta
2014-01-16 18:34:22.953000 mgr  info |     36_28_00.0003.appleseed: fg_daesign
2014-01-16 18:34:22.953000 mgr  info |     36_28_00.0037.appleseed: nb_daesign
2014-01-16 18:34:22.953000 mgr  info |     36_28_00.0030.appleseed: mjp
2014-01-16 18:34:22.953000 mgr  info |     36_28_00.0076.appleseed: yc_daesign
2014-01-16 18:34:22.954000 mgr  info |     36_28_00.0013.appleseed: sdc
2014-01-16 18:34:22.954000 mgr  info |
2014-01-16 18:34:22.954000 mgr  info | pings:
2014-01-16 18:34:22.958000 mgr  info |     yd_daesign: 0 h 23 m 48 s ago (at 2014-01-16 18:10:34.011000)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.959000 mgr  info |     nb_daesign: 0 h 30 m 51 s ago (at 2014-01-16 18:03:31.232000)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.960000 mgr  info |     fg_daesign: 0 h 14 m 17 s ago (at 2014-01-16 18:20:05.300000)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.961000 mgr  info |     yc_daesign: 0 h 20 m 35 s ago (at 2014-01-16 18:13:47.921000)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.961000 mgr  info |     mjp: 4 h 13 m 44 s ago (at 2014-01-16 14:20:38.446000)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.961000 mgr  info |     ku: 2 h 49 m 26 s ago (at 2014-01-16 15:44:56.644000)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.962000 mgr  info |     sdc: 1 h 49 m 37 s ago (at 2014-01-16 16:44:45.940000)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.962000 mgr  info |     ta: 1 h 32 m 45 s ago (at 2014-01-16 17:01:37.187574)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.962000 mgr  info | size of target directory: 1550.01/1550.0 MB (100.00 % full)
2014-01-16 18:34:22.963000 mgr  info |
2014-01-16 18:34:22.963000 mgr  info | moving frames...
2014-01-16 18:34:22.963000 mgr  info | updating dependency database of uploaded files...
2014-01-16 18:34:23.578000 mgr  info |     added 36_28_00.0001.appleseed
2014-01-16 18:34:24.304000 mgr  info |     added 36_28_00.0002.appleseed
2014-01-16 18:34:25.030000 mgr  info |     added 36_28_00.0003.appleseed
2014-01-16 18:34:25.815000 mgr  info |     added 36_28_00.0006.appleseed
2014-01-16 18:34:26.545000 mgr  info |     added 36_28_00.0007.appleseed
2014-01-16 18:34:27.254000 mgr  info |     added 36_28_00.0008.appleseed
```

Making Fetch – Render Farm

- Render Manager Robustness
 - “Rendering state” fully implicit
 - Render manager free to start/stop/crash at any time

Making Fetch – Render Farm

- Render Nodes Robustness
 - Not all geometry files or textures available to render given scene
 - On Windows: appleseed crash = Windows Error Reporting Message Box



Making Fetch – Render Farm

- Advantages
 - Easy for friends to join & participate
 - Reliable transport of scene data and rendered frames
 - Easy to add/remove render nodes
 - Easy to update new appleseed binaries
 - Easy to analyze performance and crashes of render nodes
 - Eventually quite robust



Making Fetch

Conclusion

| Mescaline Render Planning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---------|---|---------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|------|--------|-----------|
| Shot | Version | Description | 3ds max start / end | Needs DOF? | Needs Sky? | Shutter Open Duration | Pixel Samples | Light Samples | Env Samples | Pending Remarks | Color Legend: | Ready to Import | Ready to Render | Rendering | Done | Broken | Re-render |
| 00 | 08 | opening shot on the valley | 0 132 | Y | N | 0.5 | 100 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 01 | 26 | she appears on the hill | 0 115 | Y | YES | 0.5 | 100 | 8 | 16 | | | | | | | | |
| 03 | 14 | she runs down the hill | 0 170 | Y | YES | 0.25 | 64 | 16 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 04 | 07 | she enters the forest | 0 105 | Y | N | 0.5 | 64 | 10 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 04_bg | 07 | background | 0 105 | NO | YES | no motion blur | 16 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 05 | 20 | she plays in the forest 1 | 0 135 | Y | N | 0.5 | 100 | 4 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 06 | 29 | she plays in the forest 2 | 0 300 | Y | N | 0.5 | 80 | 4 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 07 | 12 | she sees the wolf | 0 90 | Y | N | 0.5 | 200 | 16 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 09 | 18 | she waits and walks by the wolf | 0 168 | NO | N | 0.5 | 200 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | 19 | she walks by the wolf | 0 118 | Y | N | 0.5 | 64 | 4 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | 24 | wolf stands up | 0 188 | Y | N | 0.5 | 100 | 4 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | 28 | she jumps over a large root and wolfgang stops | 15 130 | Y | N | 0.5 | 200 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 26 | 20 | she stops at the edge of the cliff | 0 115 | Y | YES | 0.5 | 100 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 26_bg | 20 | background | 0 115 | NO | N | 0.5 | 4 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 28 | 12 | she looks around to find a way | 0 73 | Y | YES | 0.5 | 100 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 28_bg | 12 | background | 0 73 | NO | N | 0.5 | 4 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 31 | 15 | the girl turns back to the forest | 0 50 | Y | YES | 0.5 | 100 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 33 | 07 | she puts her hand in the basket | 0 61 | Y | YES | 0.5 | 100 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 36 | 28 | wolf arrives and wants to play | 0 280 | Y | YES | 0.5 | 64 | 1 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 37 | 13 | she runs towards the exit | 0 42 | Y | N | 0.5 | 100 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 38 | 02 | closeup hood face | 0 45 | Y | N | 0.5 | 100 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 39 | 00 | closeup wolf face | 0 47 | Y | N | 0.5 | 400 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 40 | 01 | closeup hood feet | 0 75 | Y | N | 0.5 | 200 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 41 | 01 | closeup wolf face | 0 27 | Y | N | 0.5 | 400 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 42 | 01 | closeup wolf feet | 0 33 | Y | N | 0.5 | 200 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 43 | 05 | she turns away and runs | 97 148 | Y | N | 0.5 | 200 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 44 | 11 | she runs and jumps over a gap | 0 40 | Y | N | 0.5 | 400 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 45 | 04 | she looks behind while she runs | 0 34 | Y | N | 0.5 | 200 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 46 | 05 | she sees the exit | 0 44 | Y | N | 0.5 | 600 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 50 | 01 | wolf runs | 0 50 | Y | N | 0.5 | 300 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 51 | 30 | wolf runs toward the hood | 0 74 | Y | N | 0.15 | 200 | 1 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 53 | 19 | the girl tries to lift the branch without success | 0 50 | Y | N | 0.25 | 64 | 4 | - | | | | | | | | |

Total number of frames

3120

Making Fetch – Conclusion

- Special developments
 - Efficient handling of massive number of alpha cutouts
 - Dropbox-based render farm tools
 - Vast improvements to Maya-to-appleseed exporter (`mayaseed`)
- Everything has been released

Making Fetch – Conclusion

- appleseed one of the most reliable component of the pipeline
- Did not have to worry about:
 - Flickering
 - Glitches in the middle of a shot
 - Unpredictable catastrophic slowdown

Making Fetch – Conclusion

- Only two questions:
 - What render settings?
 - How long will it take?

Making Fetch – Conclusion

- What would we do differently today?
 - Export Alembic files from 3ds Max
 - Lookdev in Gaffer
 - Real hair?
 - OSL shaders?

Making Fetch – Conclusion

- Published on Vimeo
- Picked up by many big animation channels, ended up on YouTube
- Great reception on the web
- Some really nice articles written about the project

Making Fetch – Conclusion

- Official TIFF Kids 2015 selection!





Thank you!



Questions?

Extras

There's never enough!

Additional References

Direct Ray Tracing of Full-Featured Subdivision Surfaces with Bezier Clipping
<http://jcgt.org/published/0004/01/04/>

appleseed

- Many important features still missing
 - Volume rendering
 - Subsurface scattering
 - Subdivision surfaces
 - Displacement
 - Robust, complete, performant Maya integration
 - Documentation

