

Justus Pettit

Mrs. Silva

English 11 H

3 March 2023

### Pursuing a Career as a Visual Effects Artist

#### Introduction

As a technically minded person, when I experience entertainment such as movies and games, I not only tend to think just about the values, stories, and emotions conveyed, but also about what makes these experiences possible. With movies and games, this often loops back to one thing: Visual effects. Sparks flying at the clash of two weapons, armies of people the size of ants on the screen that span the whole horizon, and the portrayal of attacks and injuries made to give them weight and consequence. These effects do not just get there on their own, however; oftentimes, someone is behind the camera, carefully layering these effects onto the shots with a computer program after the shot is taken. These people are what make these experiences possible, whether it is a Marvel movie on the big screen or the smoke coming off of a Smash Bros character who has taken a lot of damage. Furthermore, the position has a solid salary, and with the advent of digital media taking over, the need for visual effects artists is rising steadily. In short, being a visual effects artist is a mentally taxing position that can take a lot of patience and problem-solving, but it definitely pays off personally and the works one can create can go on to make memories for millions of people.

## Career Duties

The job of a Visual Effects (VFX) Artist is to create objects and environments for use in digital productions such as movies or video games. This includes “particle effects, dynamic simulations, and shaders” (VFX Artist Job Profile), such as digitally generated smoke, storms, and light sources. To do this, VFX artists must work alongside artists and designers, collaborating on conceptualization and progress reports (Visual Effects Artist Job Description). On top of this, they must put these effects into the project in a way that makes the effects seem like they were a part of the project the whole time (VFX Artist Job Profile). However, integrating digital effects into analog projects is a very complicated process. For this reason, the process is split into 2-dimensional compositing and 3-dimensional modeling (VFX Artist Job Profile). The subjobs found in visual effects are “Compositing artist, effects (FX) technical director (TD), FX animator, multimedia artist, VFX artist, and VFX supervisor” (VFX Artist Job Profile). No matter what part of the process a VFX artist is a part of, though, he or she must be able to be dependable, be punctual, take criticism and manage edits, be thorough in work, work without supervision, and be comfortable in a quickly changing environment (VFX Artist Job Profile).

## Work Environment

For the average VFX artist, work may be from home or office (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), and artists will have to work long hours to manage deadlines, changes in project requirements, and various issues and challenges with software (VFX Artist Job Profile). A typical work day will start at around 9AM like most white collar jobs, but may pass well into the night and even bleed into weekends depending on the scale of the project at hand (VFX Artist Job Profile). Additionally, VFX artists may need to attend daily progress meetings or will even

be invited to social events such as competitions and celebrations (VFX Artist Job Profile).

Despite this social tendency, VFX artists do not need to dress professionally or formally, as “quality of work is more important than quality of dress” (VFX Artist Job Profile).

### Important Qualities

As a creative job, a VFX artist will need to have “a creative mind, the ability to use software packages, IT skills, attention to detail, [and] good communication skills” (VFX Artist - Skills and Qualities). Additionally, VFX artists will need to have skills in other art in mediums such as animation, design, painting, and photography, as well as other subjects such as math and science, specifically physics and computer science (VFX Artist Job Profile).

### Education/Experience Requirements

A VFX artist will “typically need a bachelor’s degree in computer graphics, art, or a related field,” according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This is because employers will want to see that an artist has experience in the industry, and thus possesses the skills needed to do the job well. However, a degree is not needed, so long as one knows how to work with VFX and software such as Adobe After Effects and Houdini (Pandit).

### Salaries

As for payment, the salary of a VFX artist is between \$71,653 and \$89,342 in the U.S. (Visual Effects Artist Salary), with the average salary being around \$78,790 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics).

## Job Outlook

The job market for VFX artists is quite stable, and with the recent rise in entertainment mediums such as movies, television shows, and video games, the occupation has “a projected growth of 5% in the next 10 years” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). This growth rate is average among jobs (Special Effects Artists and Animators).

## Educational Institution Options

One of the top colleges for degrees in visual effects is Gnomon School of Visual Effects in Hollywood, California, which offers both a 12 term and 8 term course for a Bachelor’s of Fine Arts degree in Visual Effects where students will learn to use industry-standard software such as Adobe After Effects, Houdini, and Nuke (Top Visual Effects Schools...). Another is Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia, which boasts a green screen lab, in-house theater, access to state-of-the-art software, and established industry professionals as professors (Top Visual Effects Schools). A third option is Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida, which “was named the #1 Animation Program in the U.S. by Animation Career Review, voted the #1 3D Animation School in the World by The Rookies, and #1 Animation Program by College Magazine” (Discover...). Finally, Azusa Pacific University has a Bachelor of Arts in Animation and Visual Effects course, which grants “access to APU’s state-of-the-art animation and gaming lab...green screen, and soundstage” (Animation and Visual Effects Major).

## Conclusion

The position of visual effects artist, while mentally taxing and requiring a great deal of perseverance is a good job to have, both personally with its good pay and job retention, and

societally with its ability to make an impression on generations to come. While I would likely not take the job, as I plan on having other occupations such as becoming a writer and web and game designer, I would most definitely recommend the job to anyone looking into it and would definitely take up the job myself if my other plans do not take effect.

## Works Cited

- “Animation and Visual Effects Major.” *Azusa Pacific University*, n.d.  
<https://www.apu.edu/vpa/programs/animation-visual-effects-major/>. Accessed 4 Mar. 2023.
- “Discover the Best Visual Effects Colleges in the U.S.” *College Gazette*, 24 May. 2022.  
<https://colleg Gazette.com/discover-the-best-visual-effects-vfx-colleges-in-the-us/>.  
 Accessed 4 Mar. 2023.
- Pandit, Sourabh Brahat, “Is a Degree Required to Become a VFX Artist?” *Quora*, 2018.  
<https://www.quora.com/Is-a-degree-required-to-become-a-VFX-artist>. Accessed 4 Mar. 2023.
- “Special Effects Artists and Animators.” *CollegeGrad*, n.d.  
<https://collegegrad.com/careers/special-effects-artists-and-animators>. Accessed Mar 4. 2023.
- “Top Visual Effects Schools and Colleges in the U.S. - 2022.” *Animation Career Review*, 19 Dec. 2022.  
<https://www.animationcareerreview.com/articles/top-20-visual-effects-vfx-schools-and-colleges-us-2022-rankings>. Accessed 4 Mar. 2023.
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. *United States Dept. of Labor*, 8 Sep. 2022.  
[https://www.bls.gov/ooh/arts-and-design/multimedia-artists-and-animators.htm?view\\_full](https://www.bls.gov/ooh/arts-and-design/multimedia-artists-and-animators.htm?view_full)  
 . Accessed 27 Feb. 2023.
- “VFX Artist Job Profile.” Prospects, *Jisc*, n.d.

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/vfx-artist#:~:text=VFX%20artists%20create%20photoreal%2C%20digitally,crowds%20and%20other%20digital%20assets>. Accessed 27

Feb. 2023.

“VFX Artist - Skills and Qualities.” Careers Wales, *Welsh Government*, n.d.

<https://careerswales.gov.wales/job-information/vfx-artist/skills-and-qualities>. Accessed

27 Feb. 2023.

“Visual Effects Artist Job Description.” *Betterteam*, n.d.

<https://www.betterteam.com/visual-effects-artist-job-description>. Accessed 27 Feb. 2023.

“Visual Effects Artist Salary.” *Salary.com*, 27 Feb. 2023.

<https://www.salary.com/research/salary/recruiting/visual-effects-artist-salary>. Accessed 4

Mar. 2023.