JAMES HILL

Greater Seattle Area | thirdj@gmail.com | 530.306.0022 | thirdj.artstation.com

Senior VFX Artist with 18 years of AAA experience shipping on titles at Bungie, 343 Industries, Oculus, and more. Deep expertise in real-time particle systems, GPU pipelines, shader and look development, and Unreal Engine 5 — including both proprietary in-house tools and Niagara. Passionate about mentoring VFX artists and pushing the visual bar on cross-platform titles.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

VFX & Tools: Unreal Engine 5 (Niagara, Cascade, Blueprint, Gameplay Cues), Houdini, Maya, 3ds Max, EmberGen, Substance Designer
Rendering & Shaders: PSSL, C#, Shader Graph, Material Editor, VRay, real-time PBR pipelines, GPU particle systems
Performance & Profiling: PIX, Unreal Insights, console profiling (PS4/PS5, Xbox One/Series), LOD optimization, draw call budgeting

EXPERIENCE

Senior VFX Artist III (Contract)

Riot Games — UE5 R&D Incubation (Unreleased) (Mobile)
August 2026 – Current

- Developing a Niagara based FX pipeline for a Unannounced UE5 project

Senior VFX Artist

Bungie — Destiny 2, Marathon: Season 3 (Unreleased) (PC, PS4, PS5, Xbox Series S/X)
January 2022 – June 2026

- Created player ability VFX for the industry-leading sandbox abilities team, shipping across 12+ seasons.
- Self-managed workflow and collaborated directly with design, art direction, and production teams.
- Volunteered as recurring instructor in weekly VFX education classes: internal tools, Unreal Engine, and Niagara.
- Partnered with the graphics team to research and integrate new real-time rendering techniques.

VFX Artist (Freelance)

Ironwood Studios — Pacific Drive & Whispers in the Woods (PC, PS5, Xbox Series S/X)
December 2021 – December 2022

- Created Niagara VFX for Anomaly, Ambient, and Spectacle effects.
- Helped establish and manage base Niagara emitter and material workflows.

Senior VFX Artist / Principal VFX Artist

Midwinter Entertainment / Improbable Worlds — Scavengers (PC, PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X)
January 2020 – December 2022

- Led VFX creative direction as Principal VFX Artist, establishing the visual effects look and language for Scavengers.
- Owned scheduling and tasking for the VFX outsourcing pipeline; delivered structured feedback and mentored junior artists.
- Architected Blueprint-based systems using Unreal Engine Gameplay Cues to drive runtime character VFX.
- Built content pipelines and material frameworks; prototyped and iterated rapidly with design and art.
- Optimized particle and shader effects to achieve 1080p/30fps on minimum-spec Xbox One S hardware using PIX.

VFX Artist (Contract)

343 Industries / Microsoft — Halo Infinite (PC, Xbox Series S/X)
May 2019 – December 2019

- Developed VFX and custom shaders for the sandbox team: weapons, energy barriers, gravity lifts, and destructible props.
- Collaborated with the FX team to review work and provide cross-discipline feedback.

VFX Artist (Contract)

Oculus / Facebook — First Steps (Oculus Quest VR)
October 2018 – May 2019

- Prototyped, designed, and shipped performant particle and shader VFX for the Oculus Quest NUX launch experience.

Senior Technical Artist / VFX Artist

FunBits LLC — Fat Princess Adventures (PS4), Squids From Space (PC), First Contact (Oculus Quest)
July 2014 – October 2018

- Co-developed a GPU-based particle system from the ground up with graphics engineers, scripted in PSSL and compiled on PS4.
- Designed all player-class VFX (archer, mage, engineer, warrior) including multiple weapon effect variations.
- Prototyped and implemented boss fight sequences in close collaboration with design.
- Shipped effects across mobile VR, console, and PC platforms.

EARLIER EXPERIENCE

VFX Artist | Airtight Games — Murdered: Soul Suspect (Xbox One, Xbox 360, PS3, PS4, PC) | 2010 – 2014
Environment Artist | Airtight Games — Capcom's Dark Void (Xbox 360, PS3, PC) | 2008 – 2010
VRay Render Artist (Freelance) | Speedshape | 2007

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science, Media Arts and Animation | The Art Institute of California, San Francisco | 2004 – 2007
Studies in Art History, European History and Culture | Schiller International University, Strasbourg, France | 2006