



“I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO  
DO THE THINGS I DO  
TODAY IF OTHERS DIDN'T  
SHARE THEIR KNOWLEDGE  
WITH ME IN THE FIRST  
PLACE.”

Ever since the eighties, Anders has been using computers to create artwork, although back then, all he had was a primitive Vectrex console, but now he can create fantastic renders using Cinema4D, with no plug-ins!...

**ANDERS LEJCZAK**

## ANDERS LEJCAK

Hi Anders, thanks for talking to us.

Hi, and thanks for the opportunity to be interviewed!

How did you get started in CG?

I don't know if you remember the Vectrex system? It was a vector based console available on the market during the early eighties. It had a black and white screen and you had to snatch on coloured plastic screens in front of it to be able to see the games in colour. Google for "Vectrex" images and you will see what I mean. Anyway, I got one of these in 1982 from my parents, and I also got a "light pen" with which you could draw up to two hundred - or something - vector lines on the screen. I think I actually managed to draw a Star Wars snowspeeder, and this was probably my first



CG type of "art". I wish I could show it to you but the system had one big drawback: you couldn't save your work! Later on I loved to play around with DeLuxe Paint on the different Amiga systems, and in 1995 my dad bought me a Mac copy of Bryce 1.0 (you know the landscape generator) from the U.S. As with many others, I think this program introduced me to the wonderful world of 3D. Some of my

renders were actually published in 1995 in the British magazine "MacFormat". It was the first time I had something published, and today I can't believe anybody wasted ink and paper on those renders. In 1996 I had my first real job, after graduating from University, which was as a bank clerk, and my main task was to staple papers and... well that was basically it. During the same time I attended an evening course at



the University in CAD and visualization. I picked it up pretty quickly and one year later I was hired by the University to lead the same course. I remember lecturing being great fun, and making up practical assignments; making up questions for the final exam and then correcting and grading the students was (when almost everybody passed) also great fun.

You have a website which allows users to download or purchase your virtual models. Is it a good way for artists to get their work out there? Yes I think it is - providing "free stuff" and tutorials attracts a lot of visitors. Tutorials and short "how to's" actually attracts a lot more visitors than free stuff. I wrote a tutorial about how to model, texture and rig an aeroplane and I've noticed that, even if it is now getting a little out of date, it still attracts loads of visitors. A fun detail is that I have a render called "Dirty job" on my site. It is a render of a dirty computer mouse. This particular image is generating huge amounts of traffic from people Googling for "dirty job". I wonder what they are looking for... Strangely, as it may seem, selling a model for a couple of bucks involves less hassle and generates more appreciation compared to when providing it absolutely free. When I was giving away everything for free I was drowning in mails from people not only asking, but demanding all kind of things - some of these mails were also pretty rude. I guess when you give something for free then people assume that your time and



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effort is worth nothing. It may appear cynical but I now get a lot more thank you messages from people buying models, compared to when everything was available for free download. I still have lots of material available for free download, because I believe in the idea of sharing as much



as possible. I wouldn't be able to do the things I do today if others didn't share their knowledge with me in the first place.

You have a great talent for final renders (amongst other things) but you don't seem to use any fancy plug-ins. How do you get so much realism from the images?

Thanks. Yes, that's right, I only use Cinema4D with its built in rendering engines. There are others renderers available for Cinema4D, like Final Render 2 and Maxwell renderer. I've played around with the Maxwell demo but haven't been able to generate satisfactory results, not yet anyway.

I'm sorry but I have no special tricks up my sleeve. I wish I had. You can get quite interesting results by using a well balanced combination of a standard 3-point lighting setup, and a cartoon-ish look can sometimes be at least as interesting as a photo realistic render. I often see renders created using all kinds of fancy stuff, like HRDI, GI, Ambient Occlusion, etc., but without attention to the balance and detail it makes more damage than good. Lighting a scene is of course only half the work - the rest lies on working with the textures/shaders and the different shader channels available. Tweaking diffusion, specular, reflection etc., and painting



specific textures for each channel, is at least half of the job.

I post a lot of work-in-progress images in different forums - each forum has a different crowd, and the comments and suggestions I receive therefore span across a lot of issues. In this way I can improve details I never thought of in the first place, and improve settings I thought I had done my best with. I use some post production tricks and have created a couple of actions scripts for Photoshop. This is however nothing fancier than channel mixer settings and adjustments of saturation and colour balance.

Apart from the site, what else do you do to make a living from CG?

I work as a Project Manager and Consultant at one of Europe's leading digital agencies, and in my present position I have mostly worked with clients within the automotive industry. I'm currently working with a major visualization project for Volvo Cars Corporation (VCC) but unfortunately I cannot reveal any juicy details about this until it has been launched.

There is of course a lot of CG involved, but my part is 'just' a Project Manager's role, and unfortunately I'm not very involved in the creative or the CG technical parts. You will have to come back to me at a later point





in time once  
it is launched,  
and hopefully I will  
be allowed to tell you  
more about it - it is a very  
interesting project both from a  
CG and technical perspective.

Working for a global  
corporation - like VCC - has  
of course both its ups and  
downs. The scope of the  
projects and the creative  
heights is usually very high and I've had  
assignments around the globe; everything  
from Amsterdam (Holland) to Sao Paulo  
(Brazil) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia).  
Lately however my most frequent trip is just



a 3-hour drive between Malmoe (where I live and where our home office is) and Gothenburg (where VCC has their headquarters) – not as exciting as taking a flight to Asia during the SARS disease breakout some time ago though. At the same time, working for such a corporation can be a tad frustrating. The production pipeline requires much more administrative effort compared with when working with a smaller company. As you may know, VCC is owned by a US based Ford Motor Company (FMC). The requirements on processes and control are now - after the Enron scandal - much more strict, which has had its affect all the way down to my projects. Read a couple of Dilbert cartoons and you will understand what I mean. Maybe this is why I am also a big fan of office - and cubicle - humour. Working hands on with CG is, for me, so far just a hobby, but I'm looking for an opportunity to change that. I would like to work less with project management and more with hands on CG production. Personally I have had great use of my hobby in my day job, but also the other way around

- the things I have learned via my hobby has proven to be very beneficial in my day job, and the processes used at work have been useful when working with my personal projects. Don't worry, I'm not going to bore you with an essay about "waterfall methodology contra iterative development processes", and other project management mumbo jumbo.

**You wanted to become an architect? Do you think it's a route you will ever try with CG?**

Yes that's right, but it didn't turn out that way. Well, the truth is that my grades weren't good enough when applying for the Architect program at University, but I was accepted on the Computer Science and Business Administration programs. I still have a general interest in architecture and in topics related to designing indoor or outdoor spaces. Helping somebody with visualizing possible ideas is something I hope I will still have the opportunity to do.

Just about every artist has a dream project - what's yours?

This is really a tough one. On the one hand, I would like to work on a major sci-fi flick at one of the big players like ILM, but on the other hand I would like to live in a house on the beach in a warm country like Thailand and make a living from taking on commissions once in a while, without lying sleepless at night worrying about tight deadlines. I don't know which one of these scenarios is most likely to occur. OK, seriously, the important thing for me is to try to shift my current focus on technology and processes to more dynamic and creative projects.

What one piece of advice would you give to a beginner in 3D?

I would encourage people to do two things, the first thing being to try to model your own models from scratch. I know not everybody is interested in this, but give it a try and after some initial frustration a whole new world will open. Go through every tutorial you can find, even if it covers a subject you think you already think you know. Different authors can solve the same problem in different ways, and knowing the alternatives will come in really handy in the long run. Begin with subjects that are meaningful: modelling a character or a car is maybe not the best subject to begin with and you will probably only get frustrated without having learned anything. Personally, I would also suggest that you try to learn how light and the shaders work before attempting a complex model. A scene with a simple object can be beautiful if lit in a proper (or interesting) way. Post work-in-progress images and be active in different user forums. Don't just hang around in a familiar forum where everybody knows you and where you are used to getting nice and friendly comments. When ready, post your images in other forums and ask for constructive criticism. The comments can sometimes be harsh, but as long as it is fair it will make you grow. If you have any special interest, like for example architectural visualizations or aeroplanes, then join a community that specializes in this



subject and where the rivet counters hang out. Comments will be even more nit-picky in such a forum but you will learn a lot. The second thing I would encourage is sharing. Share as much as possible of your own material. I wouldn't be able to do the things I do today if others didn't share their knowledge in the first place.

Thanks very much for talking to us. Good luck for the future. Thanks a lot!

## ANDERS LEJCZAK

For more work by this artist please visit:  
[www.colacola.se](http://www.colacola.se) Or contact them at  
[anders.lejczak@colacola.se](mailto:anders.lejczak@colacola.se)

Interviewed by: Ben Barnes

