

Open Source Physically Based Rendering with
appleseed



François Beaune
Project Founder



Fetch

appleseed

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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



Filter: Clear

Picking Mode: Material

- Name
- Render Layer
- Project
 - Scene
 - camera
 - environment
 - Environment EDFs
 - Environment Shaders
 - Colors
 - Textures
 - Texture Instances
 - Assemblies
 - assembly
 - Colors
 - Textures
 - Texture Instances
 - BSDFs
 - EDFs
 - Surface Shaders
 - Materials
 - basic_orange
 - blade_material
 - carbon_material
 - chrome_material
 - eye_material
 - eyebrow_material
 - eyelashes_material
 - face_material
 - finger_armor
 - floor_material
 - hand_armor
 - palm_armor
 - Lights
 - Objects
 - Object Instances
 - full_fm_x.arm_00_L_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_00_R_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_01_L_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_01_R_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_02_L_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_02_R_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_03_L_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_03_R_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_04_L_inst
 - full_fm_x.arm_04_R_inst
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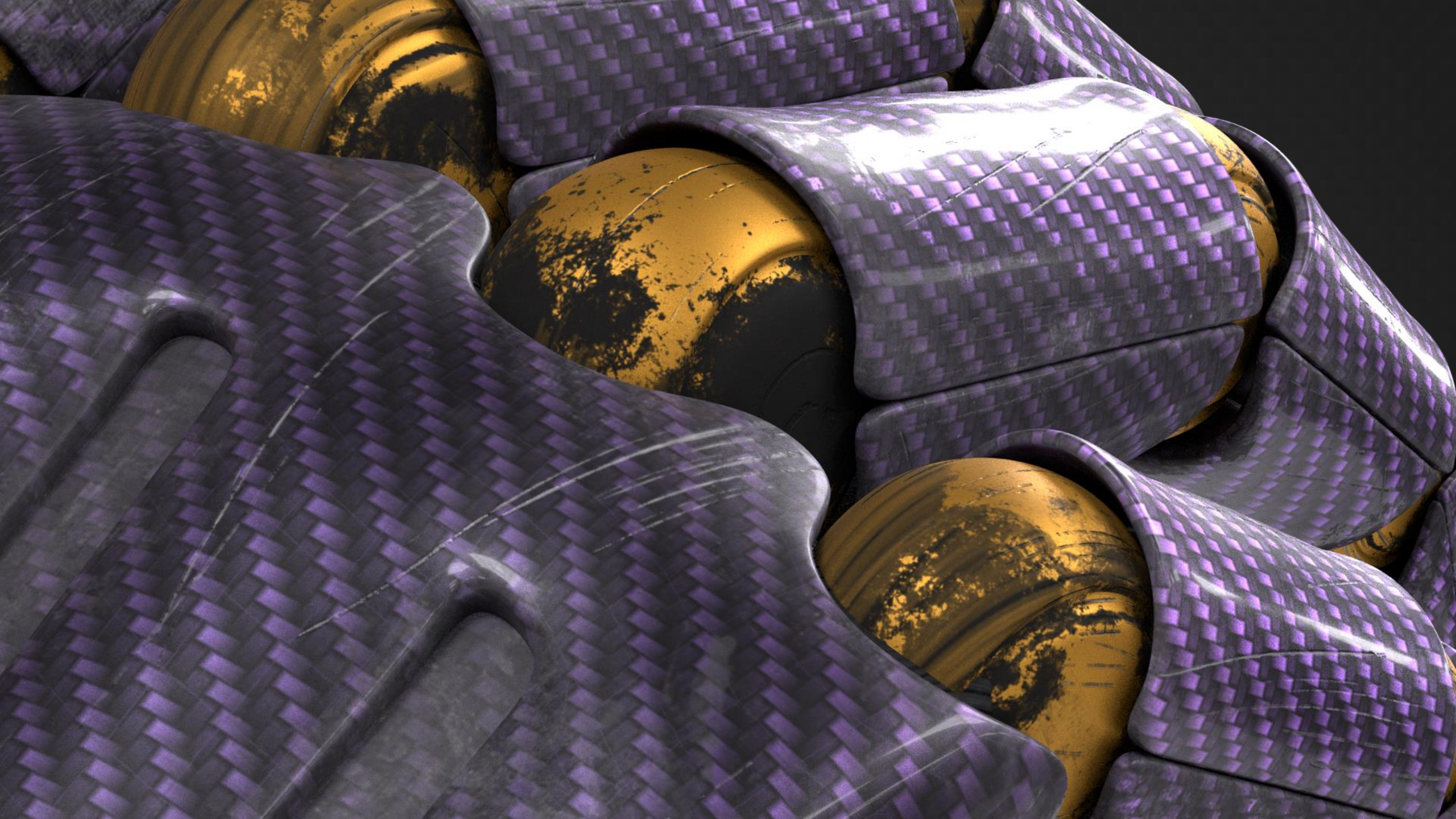


Log

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```





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

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- 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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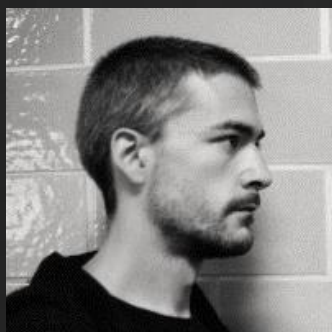
Team & Process



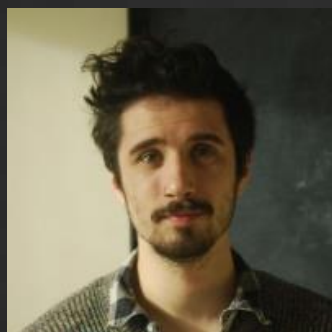
François Beaune



Esteban Tovagliari



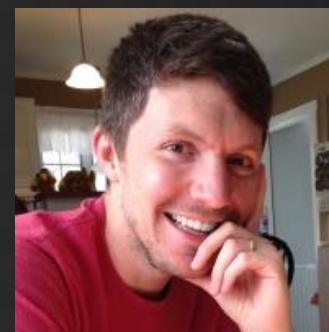
François Gilliot



Jonathan Topf



Hans Hoogenboom



Joel Daniels



Dorian Fevrier



Haggi Krey



Srinath Ravichandran



Marius Avram

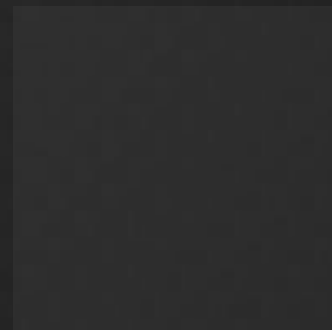
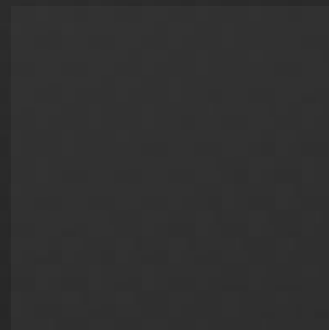
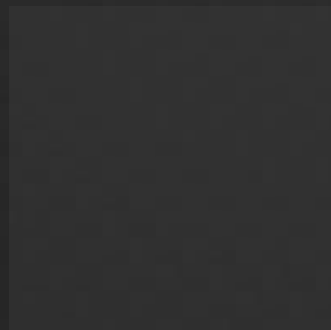
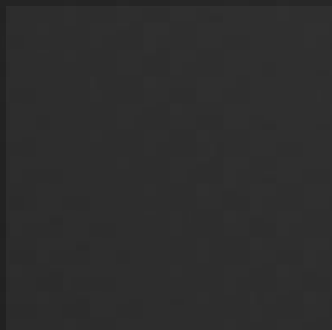
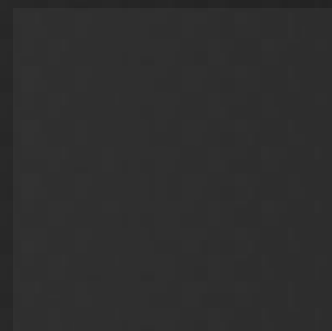
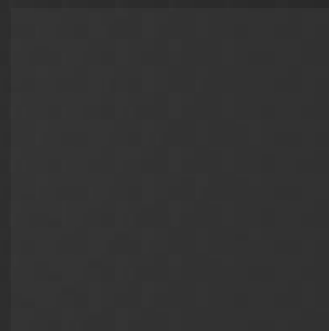
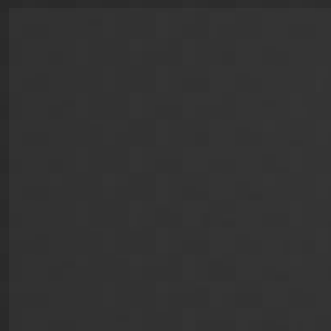
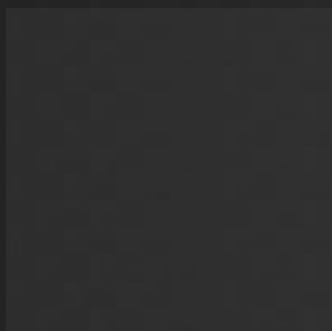
R&D



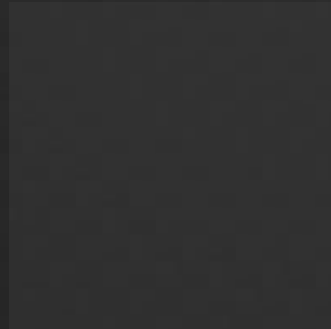
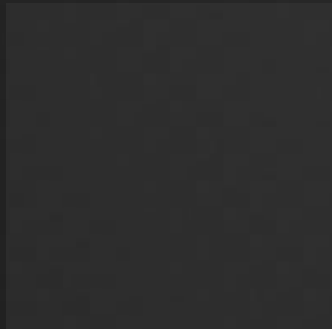
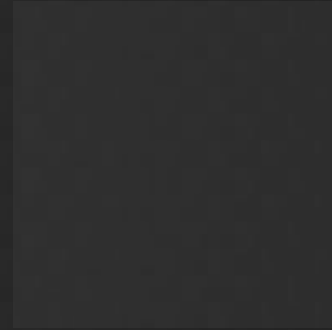
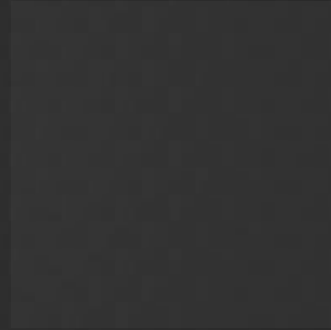
François Beaune



Esteban Tovagliari



GSoC '14 Students



Srinath Ravichandran

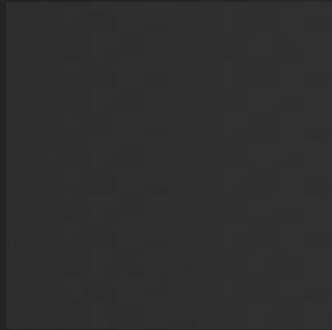


Marius Avram

Exporters & Integrations



Esteban Tovagliari



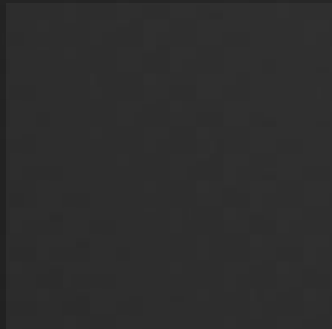
Jonathan Topf



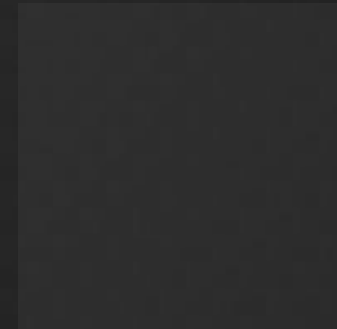
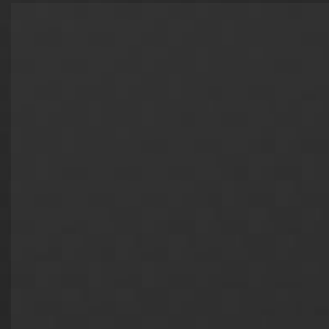
Hans Hoogenboom



Joel Daniels



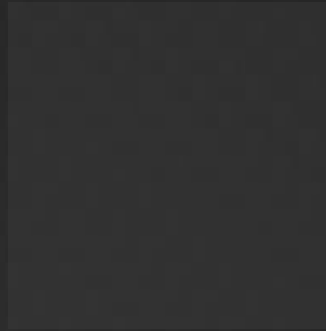
Haggi Krey



Fetch



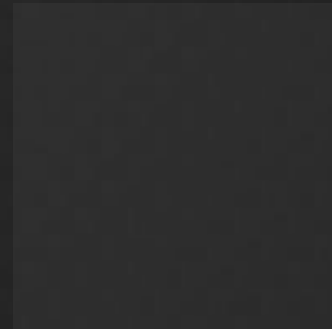
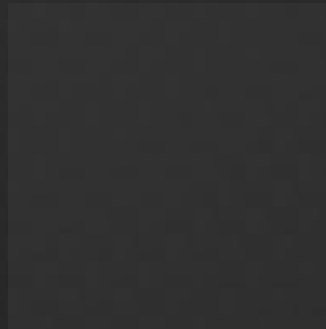
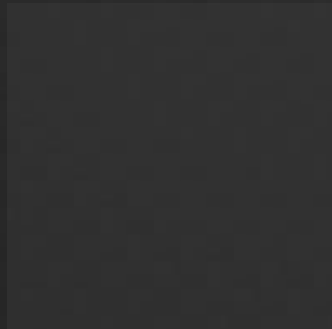
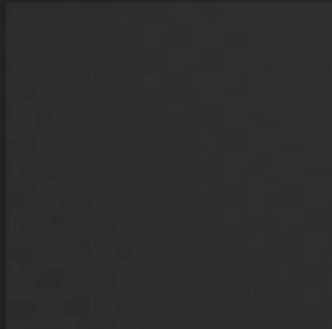
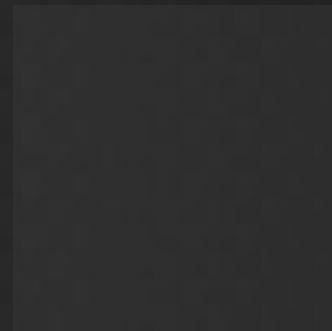
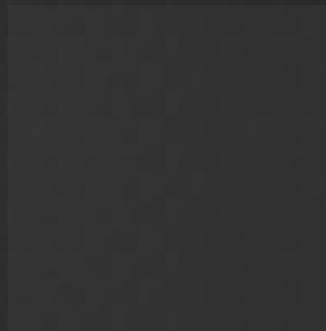
François Beaune



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

appleseed

Selected Works





Character designs by appleseed users





Fetch, a very short film



Fetch, a very short film

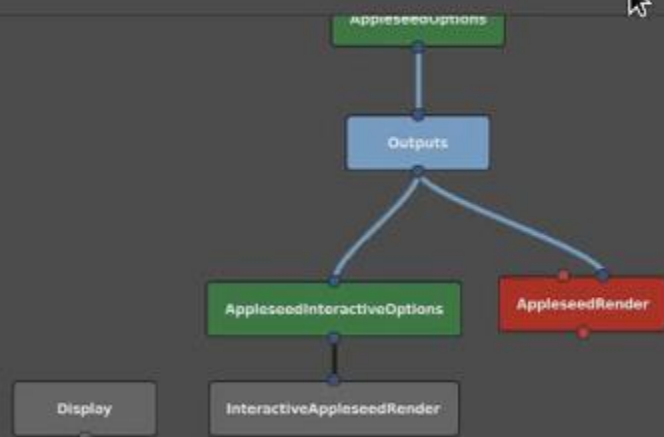
appleseed

appleseed now fully integrated into Image Engine's Gaffer

Viewer : Outputs



Node Graph



Node Editor : Outputs

Scene Inspector : Outputs



Node Name Outputs

Outputs

Settings

Node User

Interactive/Beauty

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

Node Name eractiveAppleseedRender

InteractiveAppleseedRender

Settings

User

State Stopped

Update Lights Update Attributes Update Cameras Update Coordinate Systems

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Welcoming contributions!

appleseed

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

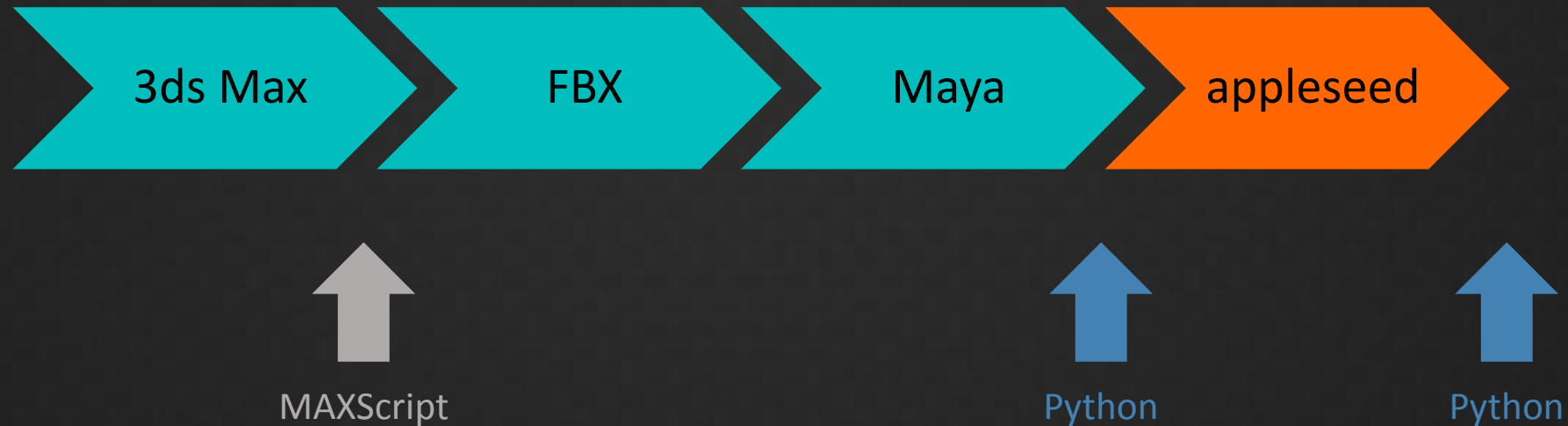
Making Fetch – Pipeline

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



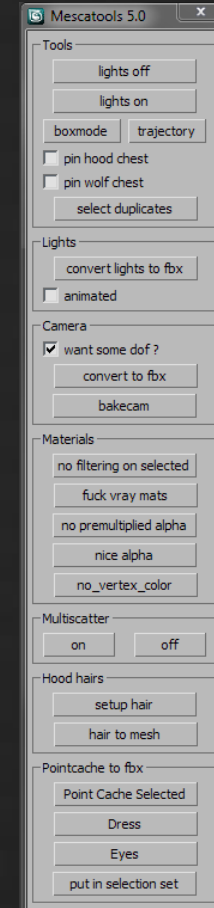
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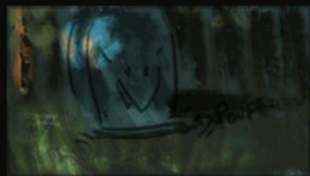
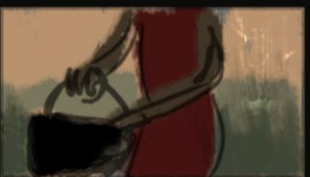
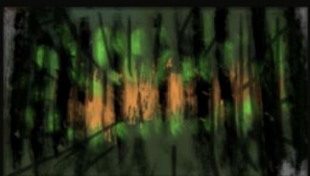
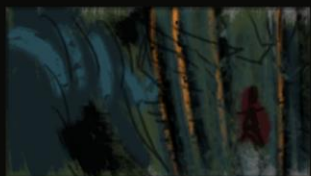
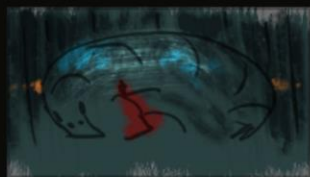
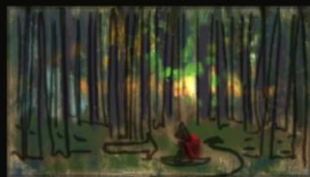
Making Fetch – Pipeline

- 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

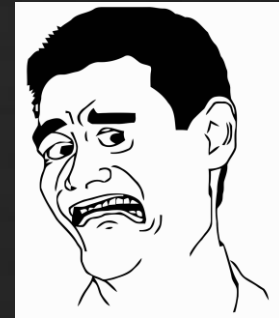
Render Setup

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

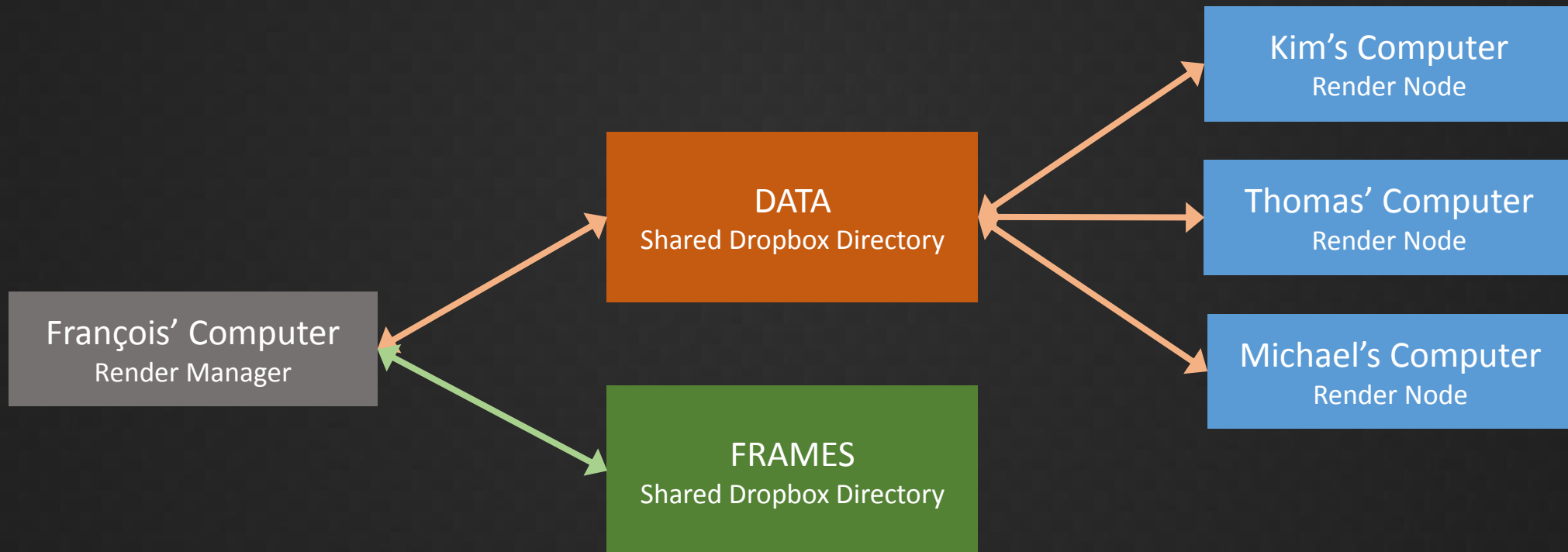
Solution:

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

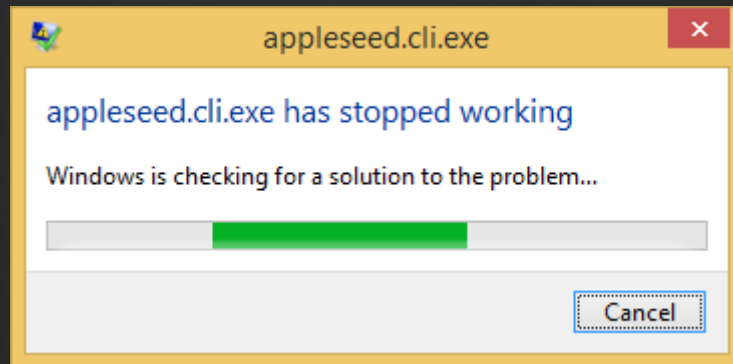
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2014-01-16 18:34:22.406000 mgr info | running rendermanager.py version 2.4.
2014-01-16 18:34:22.937000 mgr info | gathering files...
2014-01-16 18:34:22.946000 mgr info | found 280 source files in .
2014-01-16 18:34:22.946000 mgr info | found 25 completed 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
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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 18:34:22.958000 mgr info | pings:
2014-01-16 18:34:22.959000 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 |
2014-01-16 18:34:22.963000 mgr info | size of target directory: 1536.01/1536.0 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

- appraised 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!

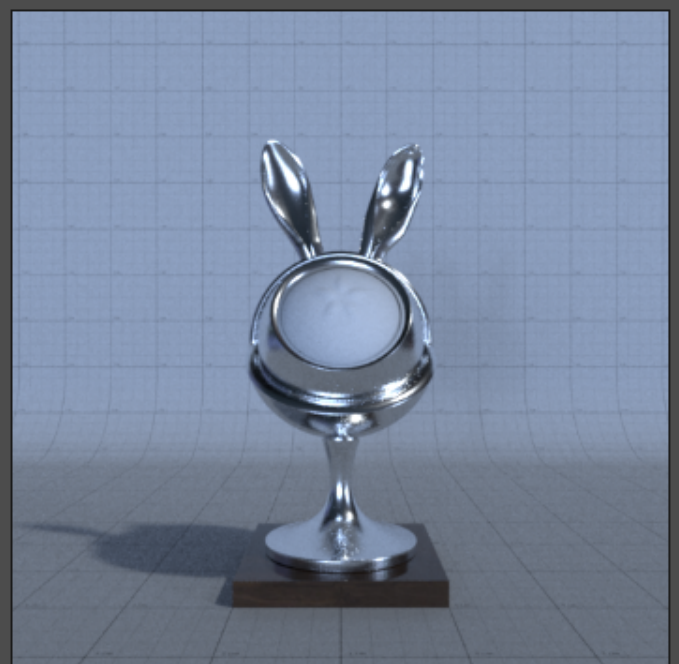
Additional References

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

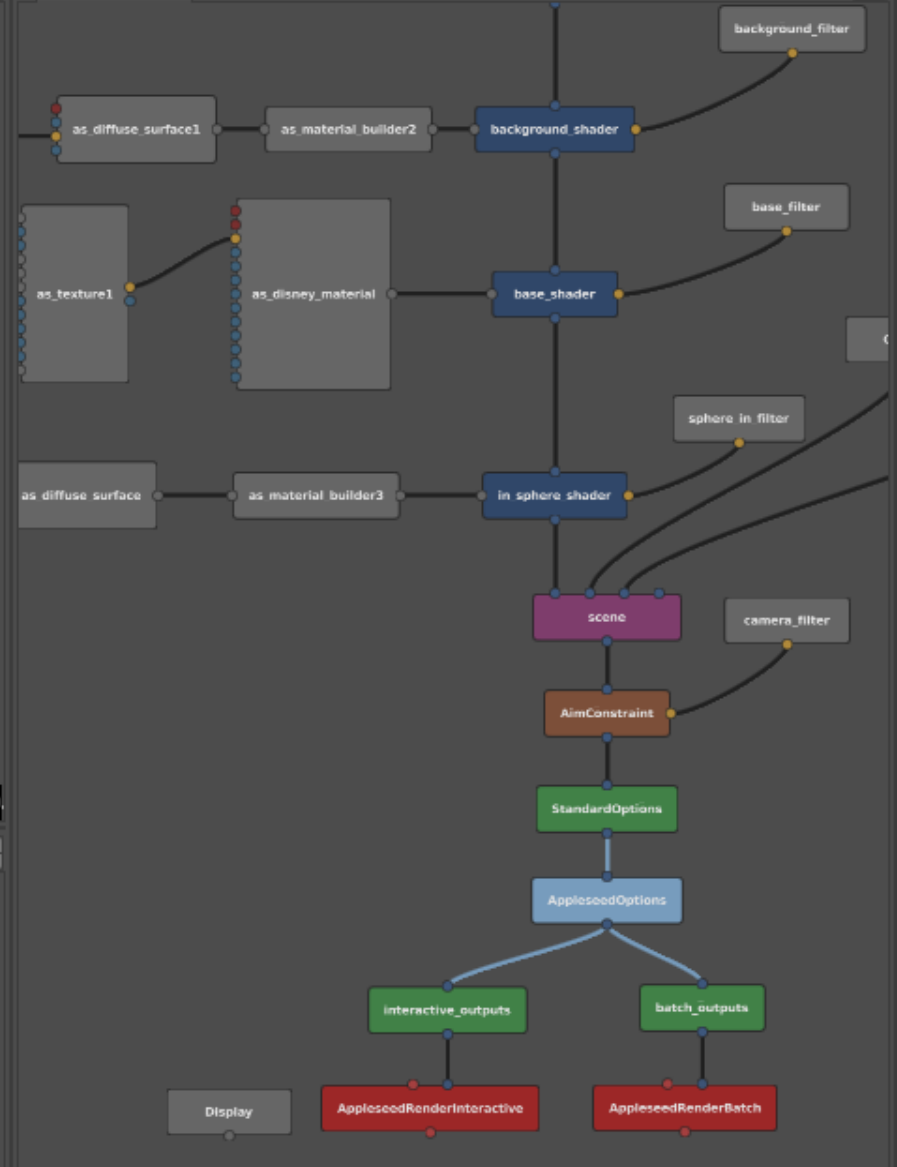
0 1 Default ▾



512x512 1.000
 XY: 566, 163 RGBA: 0.000, 0.000, 0.000, 0.000 HSV: 0

Name ^

- scene



Node Name AppleseedOptions AppleseedOptions ⓘ

Settings Node User

▼ Main (AA Samples 64, Lighting Engine pt)

- Passes
- AA Samples
- Force Antialiasing
- Decorrelate Pixels
- Lighting Engine
- Mesh File Format

► Environment (Environment /scene/lights/env_light)

► Distribution Ray Tracer

▼ Unidirectional Path Tracer (Max Bounces 10, Min Bounces 3, Next Event Estimation, IBL Samples 8)

- Direct Lighting
- Image Based Lighting
- Caustics
- Max Bounces
- RR Start Bounce
- Next Event Estimation
- Direct Lighting Samples
- IBL Samples
- Max Ray Intensity

► SPPM

► System