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JUNE 2026

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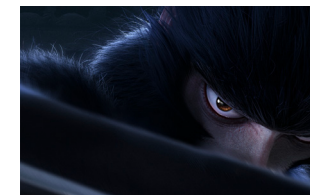


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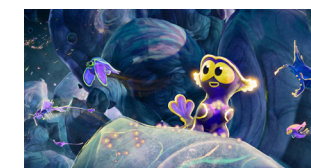
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By: Raymond D. Neoh

Blender + AI, Toward Creative Intelligence

Animation is entering one of the most important turning points in its history.

For many years, our industry has spoken mainly in the language of tools: software, rendering engines, production pipelines, plug-ins, hardware, and technical workflows. These remain important, but they no longer tell the full story. Artificial intelligence, open-source platforms, real-time engines, cloud infrastructure, and global creator communities are now changing the very structure of creative production.

The question is no longer simply: What can AI do?
The real question is: What kind of creative future do we want to build with it?

This issue of Animation Global Magazine looks beyond AI as a single technology and toward Creative Intelligence as a new ecosystem. It is an ecosystem where artists, technologists, educators, studios, students, entrepreneurs, and institutions work together to create not only content, but also standards, education systems, open tools, production methods, and cultural value.

From IAICC and BCON Shenzhen to Blender, Godot, Penpot, GCGPS, and IABE, we see a powerful new direction emerging. The future of animation will not be shaped only by the largest studios or the most expensive proprietary systems. It will also be shaped by open-source communities, small teams, independent creators, education networks, and new standards that allow global collaboration to happen with trust and discipline.

This is more than a technical revolution. It is a democratization of creative power.

Yet we must be clear: technology alone is not enough. AI can generate images, motion, sound, and even stories, but it cannot replace the human need for meaning. It cannot carry cultural memory. It cannot understand identity, emotion, history, sacrifice, humor, or hope in the way human creators do.

That is why animation matters more than ever. Animation is not only entertainment. It is a language through which civilizations imagine themselves, explain themselves, and dream forward. In the age of AI, our responsibility is not to surrender creativity to machines, but to use intelligent tools to strengthen human imagination.

The next chapter of animation will belong to those who can combine art with intelligence, openness with discipline, and technology with humanity. It will belong to creators who are not only artists, but also system builders. It will belong to studios that are not only production houses, but learning organizations. It will belong to educators and communities who prepare the next generation to create with both skill and conscience.

The age of AI has begun.
But the age of Creative Intelligence must now be built.

That is the future this magazine chooses to champion.

ANIMATION GLOBAL

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ANIMATION GLOBAL

When Creative Intelligence from Six Continents Meets in Shenzhen: The Past and Future of IAICC

FROM THE GLOBAL RESONANCE OF IAICC 2025 TO THE NEW HORIZONS OF THE 2026 INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE WEEK
NURTURE CREATIVE DREAMS, UNLOCK OPEN WORLDS



Editor: Timothy Tan

In December 2025, the second International Artificial Intelligence and Creativity Conference (IAICC 2025) in Shenzhen brought together several vital currents currently flowing through the creative industries: Hollywood's visual effects pipeline, Europe's open-source animation workflows, Asia's gaming and short drama markets, Africa's animation and VFX experience, open-source design tools, AI content production platforms, and the long-term vision of universities, enterprises, and investment institutions. Over the course of two days, IAICC 2025, held in conjunction with BCON Shenzhen (China's Official Blender Conference), attracted over 1,500 on-site attendees

and hosted more than twenty keynote speeches. Live broadcasts reached an audience of over 1 million across the film, short drama, and gaming sectors. Even more symbolically, representatives from six continents—excluding only Antarctica—gathered in Shenzhen, giving the conference a truly global presence.

The core value of IAICC lies primarily in the fact that it has never treated artificial intelligence as an isolated technological topic. The conference explores the reality on the ground as AI enters the creative industries: how animation is changing its production pipelines, how games are restructuring assets and interactions, how short dramas are finding a new balance between speed and quality, how open-

source tools are lowering the barrier to creation, and how design collaboration connects creativity with development. In its official positioning, IAICC is not merely a platform to showcase cutting-edge AI and creative technologies to industry professionals; it emphasizes fostering a collaborative ecosystem through the sharing of information, artworks, and innovative concepts.

A heavyweight lineup of speakers provided rare depth to these discussions. Dr. Scott Ross, co-founder of Digital Domain and former General Manager of Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), brought historical experience and production management perspectives from the global VFX industry. Francesco Siddi,



Chief Operating Officer of Blender and Producer at Blender Studio, placed open-source 3D creation firmly at the center of Asia's industry dialogue. Léo Silly-Pelissier, Animation Director of the Oscar-winning animated feature *Flow*, along with Technical Artists Mārtiņš Upiġis and Konstantīns Višņevskis, used their actual work to prove that a new production paradigm can be formed between small teams, open-source tools, and distinct auteur expression. Furthermore, Wayne Kennedy from Blizzard Entertainment shared insights on game production and international project management, while representatives from Godot, Penpot, and Chocolate Tribe extended the agenda to open-source game engines, open design collaboration, and South African animation and VFX practices.

Behind these names lies a next-generation creative workflow that is currently taking shape. Topics such as the Blender animation pipeline of Flow, the restructuring of CG rendering content production via AI technology, the application of Blender in the TV animation *Deep Dive - Forced Rewind*, and "Open Source Creates the Future: A New Revolution in AI, Community, and Creativity" allowed the audience to deeply understand that technology is not a distant concept. Rather, it offers concrete methods capable of transforming storyboarding, modeling, rendering, compositing, design communication, and team collaboration.

The practical density of the conference was equally remarkable. Four flagship courses comprehensively covered Penpot MCP and design dialogue, Godot mini-game creation, stylized 3D illustration with Grease Pencil and Deep Paint, and animation creation using Blender for solo artists or small teams. These courses moved "Open Source + AI" from the podium to the workbench, allowing developers, artists, designers, and students to find their own entry points within the same toolchain.

IAICC 2025 also fully showcased the vibrant vitality of China's local creative industries. Domestic guests including Liu Shan (Core Creative Team Member of the Closing Ceremony of the Beijing

2022 Winter Olympic Games; Renowned Visual Artist), Guan Nanxiang (Founder and CEO of Gandi Culture & Technology; AI Visual Effects Director of Classic of *Mountains and Seas: Xuanwu*, China's first theatrical AI-animated feature film), Nie Huajun (Founder of Shenzhen Rocket VFX Technology Co., Ltd.; VFX Supervisor for *Ne Zha*, *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, and *The Mermaid*), Raymond Neoh (Founder and Director of CGGE; widely recognized as the "Father of China's CG Industry"), and MAJA (Art Director of the television series *The Three-Body Problem*; VFX Designer for the feature film *The Stage*), VAST (Tripo AI) founder Song Yachen, RayVision's Zou Qiong, Baidu AI Cloud's Kong Weijian, and CGModel's Dong Yan shared market insights and project



experiences alongside their international peers. Over 400 enterprise professionals from the film, gaming, and short drama sectors participated in the seminars, making the conference a crucial arena for industry insiders to observe global case studies, seek partners, and understand the implementation paths of new tools.

More notably, IAICC did not stop at content sharing. A series of achievements—including the product launch of RayVision's "AIGC Content Creation Platform," the initiation of the Zheng He Transmedia project, and the signing of the Shenzhen University-CGGE Creative Intelligence Industry Collaborative Platform—signaled that the conference has begun to serve as a core hub connecting technology, education, projects, capital, and industry resources.

Looking back from the vantage point of 2026, IAICC's next steps are even clearer. The third International Artificial Intelligence and Creativity Conference is planned to be upgraded as the core content of the "International Creative Intelligence Week" (ICIW), tentatively scheduled to be held in Shenzhen from November 20 to 24, 2026. As 2026 coincides with the APEC summit being held in Shenzhen, ICIW hopes to form a strategic synergy with this international city event, inviting more Pan-Asian representatives, creators, technical



teams, and industry institutions to join, making Shenzhen a vital convergence point for creative intelligence exchange in Asia.

"Nurture Creative Dreams, Unlock Open Worlds" is by no means a simple slogan. It precisely corresponds to IAICC's clear trajectory from 2025 to 2026: cultivating creative talent through education, connecting global communities through open source, driving industry upgrades through AI, and participating in the future narrative of global creative technology from an Asian perspective. For practitioners in animation, gaming, short dramas, design, film, and digital arts, this is exactly the significance of IAICC—it brings together people with different languages, tools, and market experiences,

bringing the working methods of the future into the present day.

We welcome all those interested in IAICC and the 2026 International Creative Intelligence Week to visit the official website at <https://iciweek.cn/> for updates on speakers, agendas, and registration information.



BCON Shenzhen 2025: Connecting the Global 3D Creative Ecosystem



Blender Conference Shenzhen — Main Venue: New Building, Tsinghua University Research Institute, Shenzhen

Editor: Adrian Chow, Timothy Tan

On 13–14 December 2025, a historic milestone was reached for the Blender community across Asia. The official Blender Conference (BCON) crossed oceans and mountains for the very first time, making its grand debut in Shenzhen, China, as Asia's inaugural Blender Conference. More than a regional echo of the annual BCON held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, this event was conceived as a powerful nexus purpose-built to bridge China's creative ecosystem with the world. As Asia's first official Blender Conference, BCON Shenzhen gave vivid expression to the open-source community's borderless spirit of sharing, bringing together the

world's foremost creators and China's homegrown pioneers under one roof.

A Key Figure: Blender's COO Arrives in Person for Deep Dialogue with China's Community Leaders

At the heart of the conference, Blender's Chief Operating Officer Francesco Siddi travelled to Shenzhen as the Blender Foundation's principal representative. He delivered a keynote address outlining the global development roadmap and operational philosophy of the Blender project, and engaged in substantive discussions with China's most active developers and artists. His presence was a powerful signal of the Blender Foundation's deep regard for the Chinese community, and a tremendous boost

of confidence for the broader Asian community.

A Global Perspective: The Oscar-Winning Film *Flow* Team Delivers a Landmark Presentation

One of the most electrifying highlights of the conference was the appearance of the core creative team behind the Oscar-winning animated feature *Flow*. This full-length animated film, produced entirely using the open-source software Blender, not only dazzled on the international stage but also demonstrated, beyond any doubt, the formidable power of Blender in top-tier film production.

Animation director Léo Silly-Pélissier, alongside technical artists Mārtiņš Upiġis



■ Blender Chief Operating Officer Francesco Sidi

and Konstantins Višņevskis, took to the stage to deliver an invaluable, hands-on account of their work. They offered a detailed breakdown of the Blender animation pipeline behind Flow — from early visual exploration and character rigging, through complex water simulation, to final rendering — holding nothing back as they revealed how the team leveraged Blender's open-source nature to overcome the most demanding production challenges.

Even more exciting was the IP collaboration that the conference helped to catalyse. This cross-border IP partnership not only embodied the open-source ethos of mutual support and shared benefit that defines the Blender community, but also gave Chinese creators a rare and invaluable opportunity to engage and collaborate with a world-class international IP — a perfect embodiment of BCON's core value of "sharing and connection."

Homegrown Pioneers: China's Blender Practitioners on the Front Line

The other stars of the conference were the outstanding speakers from across China — creators working on the front line, using Blender to solve real-world production challenges. Their presentations spanned

a broad spectrum of art and technology, showcasing the depth of Blender's adoption across Chinese industries.

An Overview of Blender C/C++ Development – Wu Yiming

Wu Yiming, an official Blender developer and the only developer in China working in direct collaboration with Blender, delivered an accessible yet insightful introduction to the principles and methods of custom Blender development. He highlighted how Blender's open-source nature makes it an exceptionally flexible platform — capable of serving animation studios, scientific visualisation, smart city applications, and even stage lighting control, all through tailored development.

Bilibili Blender content creator "Chili



■ Blender Artist and Programmer Wu Yiming

Sauce" and series director "Yinhe Juanzhi" (Jiang Qinghua) jointly shared their behind-the-scenes production experience on the TV animation *Deep Dive: Forced Rewind*, as well as their forward-looking explorations into the future development of Blender.



■ Left to right: Director Jiang Qinghua, Chili Sauce (Cui Xiao)

VFX Supervisor Ma Jia shared his experience leading visual effects development on the period realist film *The Stage* using Blender as the primary tool. Set in late Qing Dynasty Beijing, over 50% of the film's visual effects involved urban reconstruction and scene extension.



■ VFX Supervisor MAJA

Drawing on the film *Soul* as a metaphor, Ma Nan observed that the beauty of life's structures and colours represents nature's "final consolation" to humanity — when all worldly achievements prove illusory, sensory experience itself is what endures. He encouraged digital artists to draw boundless inspiration from open-source scientific data, and to use Blender to render the true warmth of life.

Sun Shisheng shared the story of founding ZRO2 Studio with his partner, built on a core belief in "play" and "anti-industrialisation" — rejecting the traditional



■ OmooLab Founder Ma Nan

assembly-line division of labour in favour of a Block modular workflow, where each artist takes ownership of an entire segment of content, preserving creative integrity and a sense of achievement. He argued that Blender is ideally suited to the "wild CG artist": open-source development brings daily updates in techniques and resources; the shortcut logic makes the software feel intuitive; and its all-in-one capability covers the full pipeline from animatics to sculpting and rendering.

HulkFatZerg and his partner Robert shared their personal journey from traditional designers to Blender practitioners, and how they are driving the popularisation of Blender in China through content ecosystems and AI technology. The team hopes to participate in — or lead — the industry standardisation of Blender curricula, with plans to expand

from Xi'an to Shenzhen to reduce the cost of learning for students from other cities. They extended an open invitation to 3D artists, enterprises, and universities alike: making Blender more popular in China is a collective endeavour.



■ ZRO2 Muscle Rabbit Digital Artist and Director Sun Shisheng

Looking Ahead to BCON 2026: Deepening Connections, Building the Ecosystem Together

Building on the success of 2025, BCON Shenzhen 2026 will carry an even greater mission. In the coming year, the conference is expected to expand further in scale, inviting more studios and educational institutions from across Asia that work with Blender to participate in a deeper capacity. Core themes are likely to centre on the convergence of AI and open-source creation, the real-world application of Blender in virtual

production, and the cultivation of a new generation of open-source artists.

BCON is more than a showcase for technology — it is a catalyst for ideas. The 2026 conference will continue to serve as the central node connecting China's Blender user base, which accounts for 14% of the global total, with the world's creative ecosystem, sparking ever more cross-border collaboration and innovation, and keeping the flame of open-source creativity burning ever brighter across Asia. We look forward to witnessing, at the next edition, even more extraordinary creations powered by Blender.



■ Left to right: Chao Yangbo (Robert), Wang Long (HulkFatZerg)

International Creative Intelligence Week: A Week of Celebration — Asia's New Stage for Shared Horizons Nurture Creative Dreams, Unlock Open Worlds



Editor: Timothy Tan

As artificial intelligence moves into the deep waters of the creative industries, the International Creative Intelligence Week (ICIW) is building a platform in Shenzhen — one that faces Asia and connects the world. This year's theme, "Nurture Creative Dreams, Unlock Open Worlds," captures the core vision of ICIW with precision: to cultivate the next generation of talent through creative education, to open up broader spaces for industry collaboration through the open-source spirit, and to bring AI developers and practitioners,

creative artists, and animation and games professionals together on a single stage to meet, learn, and co-create.

In 2026, the third edition of the International AI and Creativity Conference (IAICC) is set to be elevated into the International Creative Intelligence Week, planned for 20–24 November in Shenzhen, China. The timing carries particular significance. 2026 marks the year APEC will convene in Shenzhen, and ICIW aims to align strategically with this major international city event — leveraging Shenzhen's unique position at the intersection of technological

innovation and cultural industry to invite a wider range of industry representatives, institutions, creators, and young talent from across the Pan-Asia region. The previous two editions of IAICC and their associated events have collectively drawn approximately 5,000 participants from the global AI and creative sectors, including industry leaders, academic scholars, and corporate representatives — a foundation that makes the expansion to a full week of programming a natural and timely step.

ICIW's elevation to a week-long event reflects the reality that creative intelligence as a subject has long outgrown the

boundaries of a single conference. AI is now deeply embedded across animation production, game development, short drama production, interaction design, open-source tooling, education and training, and industry investment. A more expansive schedule allows keynote summits, technical workshops, community meetups, closed-door industry sessions, and public exhibitions to form a continuous, immersive experience — enabling participants to absorb emerging trends, get hands-on with tools, view outstanding work, meet like-minded collaborators, and convert conversations directly into project partnerships, all within the span of a few days.

Core Programmes: Building the Creative Intelligence Ecosystem Across Multiple Dimensions

The International AI and Creativity Conference (IAICC) will continue to focus on how AI is reshaping 3D content creation, game development, and film and television production. It will bring together technology leaders, creative pioneers, and industry institutions to engage in substantive discussion on the frontier trends, commercial applications, and responsible development of AIGC.

BCON Shenzhen — China's Official Blender Conference carries a vital mission for the open-source 3D creative ecosystem. In 2025, BCON Shenzhen made its debut as Asia's first official Blender Conference, with a strong emphasis on connecting China's creative ecosystem with the world. In 2026, it will continue to drive the adoption of open-source tools across animation, visual effects, game assets, and educational contexts.

The Penpot "Penpod China" Meetup will offer designers, developers, and product teams a more open gateway to collaboration. In the age of AI, creation does not begin at the final rendered image — it takes root in the early stages of concept design, interface prototyping, interaction experience, and team coordination. This community gathering helps establish a shared language

between design and development, making open toolchains a critical foundation for bringing creative ideas to life.

The **AI Short Drama Creative Workshop** responds to the rapid evolution of the short drama market, exploring the application of generative AI in scriptwriting, visual effects, music and sound design, and production workflows — helping creators find the right balance between efficiency gains and narrative quality.

The Game Development Closed-Door Session will focus on frontier topics including AI-driven art asset generation, automated level design, and intelligent NPC behaviour, providing game teams with practical toolchain experience and real-world case studies that are directly applicable to production.

OriginCG Games and Animation Expo extends the professional conversation into the realm of public experience. Through IP co-creation, AI interactive experiences, 3D printing, and more, it invites fans, cosplayers, developers, and brand

partners to participate together in the construction of digital creative culture. Shared Dreams, New Horizons
ICIW is committed to building an Asian creative intelligence platform that spans learning, showcase, commerce, investment, education, and community development. Each programme is not a standalone event, but an organic component of a larger ecosystem — a place where technology meets art, open-source runs alongside commerce, and global vision resonates with local practice. We welcome all those interested in ICIW to visit the official website at <https://iciweek.cn/> for updates on speakers, programme schedules, and registration.



Open Tools, Open Futures: Blender, Godot, Penpot, and the Creative Revolution AI Cannot Own



Editor: Timothy Tan

Open-source creative software is having a visibility moment, but visibility is not the same as sustainability. That tension shaped “The Open Future: AI, Community, and the Next Creative Revolution,” a BCON Blender Conference Shenzhen 2025 panel moderated by Timothy Tan of CGGE with Francesco Siddi of Blender, Pablo Ruiz-Múzquiz of Kaleidos and Penpot, and Ilena Yeru Pegan of the Godot Foundation. The session brought

together a 3D creation suite, a game engine, and a design platform, but its real subject was power: who controls creative tools, who pays for them, and how open communities should respond to artificial intelligence.

The moderator connected the discussion to China’s fast-growing familiarity with open source, particularly through AI. Yet in the creative industries, open source is not a new fashion. Blender is a leading free and open-source 3D creation platform; Godot offers developers a

royalty-free engine for 2D and 3D games; and Penpot positions itself as an open-source design platform for teams building digital products together. What made the panel compelling was that these projects defend openness through different audiences, funding logics, and community relationships.

Siddi represented Blender’s 3D creation ecosystem, speaking from the perspective of artists, animators, studios, educators, and developers who rely on professional-grade free/open-source

software. Pegan represented Godot’s game-development community, where indie developers, studios, educators, and engine contributors value accessibility, royalty-free use, and freedom from lock-in. Ruiz-Múzquiz represented Penpot’s design and product community, where designers, developers, design-system teams, and cross-functional software teams are searching for a more open way to collaborate across design, code, and AI workflows.

“How does your organization engage with AI without supplanting artists?”

The panel’s strongest exchange came when moderator asked how each organization approaches AI while preserving human creativity. The answers showed three forms of restraint: Blender’s ethical caution, Penpot’s platform humility, and Godot’s community-first pragmatism.

For Blender, Siddi treated AI as a

layered production question rather than a prompt-box race. It would be easy to insert generative features into Blender, but implementation is not the hard part. The harder questions concern training data, intellectual property, legality, and artist authorship. “There are so many questions about how this model is trained. Where is the IP coming from?” he said, pointing to the unresolved foundations beneath much of generative AI.

Blender’s stance is not anti-AI. It is anti-rush. Siddi noted that machine learning already exists in Blender through denoising for path-traced rendering. The more attractive path is practical assistance: denoising, upscaling, character posing, object segmentation for visual effects, and tools that leave the creative process editable and accountable. That approach fits Blender’s mission to place “the world’s best 3D CG technology in the hands of artists as free/

open source software.” If AI belongs in Blender, it must strengthen the freedom to create rather than replace creation with opaque outputs.

For Penpot, Ruiz-Múzquiz narrowed the discussion from general AI to large language models. His argument was not that Penpot knows the future of design software. It was that nobody does. LLMs have made prediction less reliable, so Penpot’s response is to become more open to external invention. “Since I don’t know, I want you to decide,” he said, describing a strategy based on extensibility, ownership, control, and sovereignty.

That answer reflects Penpot’s role as a bridge between designers and developers. Penpot presents itself as an open-source design platform for scalable collaboration, including UI design, code, design systems, and AI workflows. The





panel gave that positioning a sharper meaning: AI should not become another layer of platform dependency. Teams should be able to build AI-assisted workflows on top of the tool while retaining the ability to inspect, adapt, and govern them.

For Godot, Pegan gave the most direct answer: “Our community is not asking for AI.” Godot’s direction comes through consensus among maintainers, contributors, volunteers, and users. Pegan did not rule out AI; they mentioned plugin experiments, including co-pilot-like tools for GDScript. But the distinction was clear. AI can develop at the ecosystem edge before it becomes a core priority.

That restraint fits Godot’s institutional purpose. The Godot Foundation supports an engine that breaks down barriers to game development and remains free and open source. In a proprietary roadmap, AI features may arrive because they satisfy investors or competitive pressure. In Godot, they must earn their place through user need, contributor energy, and maintenance capacity.

“How do these projects actually work

as businesses or institutions?”

The moderator then shifted to the practical question behind every open-source success story: how does it survive? The discussion made clear that open source is not a business model. It is a commitment that needs a structure suited to the product.

For Penpot, Ruiz-Múzquiz clarified that Kaleidos began in 2011 as a service company before creating Taiga and then Penpot. But Penpot’s future, he said, is neither services nor traditional open core. Its planned Open Nitrate Model keeps the most feature-complete product open source and captures value when organizations need to restrict or govern how the tool is used. “If you are happy with open source and the most advanced model, it’s free for everyone. If you are to constrain it, then you have to pay,” he explained.

The model reverses the usual open-core bargain. Instead of charging for advanced features, Penpot charges for control: limiting sharing, approving plugins, enforcing organizational policy, or reshaping default freedoms for enterprise use. That works because Penpot is a

collaborative platform, where governance has economic value. Penpot does not monetize freedom; it monetizes the need to manage freedom at scale.

For Godot, Pegan described a donation-led model whose strength is also its constraint. Godot’s promise to developers is unusually direct: no matter how many games they sell, they do not owe the engine a percentage. That absence of royalties is central to Godot’s identity. The Godot Foundation, formed in 2022, administers charitable contributions and states that the project is funded entirely by donations from individuals and organizations.

The challenge is sustainability. A 2023 Godot funding breakdown said the project was sustained completely by donations, had recurring support of just under \$14,000 per month at the time, and maintained 10 contractors costing roughly \$40,000 per month. Pegan’s panel remarks made that reality human: Godot must build forward with available resources while balancing passionate contributors with community goals. Its advantage is alignment. Its risk is that the commons must continually persuade beneficiaries to fund it.

For Blender, Siddi described a more hybrid structure. Blender’s main income comes through Development Fund memberships and one-time donations, while Blender Studio offers subscription-based access to production knowledge and assets. At the time this article’s sources were reviewed, the Blender Development Fund page displayed \$326,619 in monthly contributions, supported by 7,406 individuals and 47 corporate members.

Siddi emphasized that diversification is essential because Blender is not a hosted service with a neat enterprise control layer. It is a professional desktop creation suite, a community, a codebase, a production culture, and an ecosystem of artists and studios. Corporate sponsorship requires relationship-building; institutional funding has procedures; and Blender Studio, although historically important,

cannot by itself carry modern Blender development. The tool remains free, but the labor behind it must be financed through many channels.

The three models protect different forms of freedom. Penpot’s open product plus paid governance capabilities allows advanced features to remain available while charging organizations for restriction, though it depends on enterprise willingness to pay for governance. Godot’s donation and foundation model preserves royalty-free access and community trust, but funding volatility limits paid development capacity. Blender’s mix of Development Fund support, donations, corporate sponsorship, and Studio subscriptions diversifies support for a large professional tool, while requiring constant relationship-building and resource prioritization.

“How do communities and internal projects steer the ship?”

The final substantive theme was direction. If users and contributors sustain open-source tools, how much should they shape the roadmap?

For Blender, Siddi pointed to content-driven development. Blender’s open movies and studio projects are not merely showcases; they are pressure tests. The team uses Blender for the kind of work Blender is meant to enable, discovering needs through production. Siddi’s BCON profile connects him to open-source film projects including Tears of Steel, Caminandes, and Cosmos Laundromat, and Blender’s official materials describe Studio production as a way to push Blender development and share professional production knowledge.

Scale complicates listening. Beginners may want simplicity, studios may want stability, and professionals may want speed. Blender must learn from requests without losing its identity as a productive tool for high-efficiency work.

For Penpot, community pressure takes the form of expectation. Ruiz-Múzquiz explained that Penpot was created because Kaleidos needed a better bridge between designers and developers. Yet



UI design has often revolved around one dominant tool at a time: InVision, Sketch, then Figma. Users therefore ask new tools to behave like the incumbent. Penpot’s challenge is to feel familiar enough to adopt while refusing to become a clone. “We don’t want to copy what is already there. We want to go beyond,” Ruiz-Múzquiz said.

For Godot, Pegan emphasized contribution pathways. Studios that need specific engine capabilities can contribute developer time, sponsor work, or open proposals. Dissatisfaction is not simply a complaint; if articulated through the project’s processes, it becomes direction-setting information. That makes Godot’s

community both its audience and part of its production system.

Openness as operational discipline

The panel’s lasting insight was the moderator’s closing reminder that open source is not free. It may be free to download, study, modify, and use commercially, but it is not free to maintain. Blender, Godot, and Penpot show that openness is not one model. It is a discipline of governance, funding, restraint, and trust. In an AI-driven creative economy, that discipline may matter as much as any feature release.



When Creativity Meets Open Source: Inside IAICC 2025's Flagship Sessions



Editor: Catina Yiu

Closed-source software still dominates the modern tech industry, but as open-source alternatives grow in reach, more creators are making the switch. Open-source tools are reshaping how entire industries create and operate. With zero tool costs and thriving community participation, a historic shift is underway: the creative capacity of solo creators and small teams is fast approaching what once required an entire studio.

Ask a creator about their workflow a few years ago, and most would name Adobe, Unity, or another paid tool from a major company. But inside IAICC's classrooms, all four courses covering 3D design, animation, and game development run

entirely on free, open-source software: Penpot, Blender, and Godot.

1. Using Penpot MCP and Talk to Your Designs

Product development has a familiar problem: when designers and engineers work on the same project, communication often feels like two people speaking different languages. Information flows in one direction, rarely through genuine collaboration.

Design and development have long operated as two separate worlds, with different tools and different mindsets. Penpot changes that. This open-source UI design tool is built around CSS, meaning that when designers create web layouts, they are working within the same structural logic engineers already use. A

shared standard makes both sides easier to understand, breaking down a long-standing communication barrier.

Hong Kong-based curriculum designer Catina Yiu led this session, introducing learners to the Penpot MCP (Model Context Protocol) workflow. MCP creates a direct, two-way connection between AI agents and Penpot design files, allowing AI tools to programmatically read, create, and modify design elements within a file.

Penpot MCP operates through a three-layer architecture:

AI Client: Where you enter instructions or prompts in your AI interface.

MCP Server: Receives natural language requests from the client and translates

them into specific commands or code that Penpot can execute.

Penpot MCP Plugin: A plugin running within the Penpot browser tab, connecting your active design file to the server. The AI can see and act on the current page in real time.

The first half of the session walked learners through setting up their environment in Cursor. In the second half, the instructor demonstrated live how prompts can drive the entire workflow, making it tangible what it means to talk to your design with AI. Simple natural language instructions like "move this button to the right," "check whether this component's colour matches the design system," or "standardise the naming of elements across the file" were executed directly in Penpot. Learners interacted with AI to convey their design intent and generate high-quality HTML and CSS code, significantly lifting creative output.

2. Creating Stylized 3D Illustrations Using Grease Pencil & Deep Paint

The gap between 2D and 3D artists comes down to technique and mindset. 2D artists work intuitively, letting lines, colour, and form be guided by instinct. 3D artists think in steps: editing vertices, edges, and faces to build structure, doing UV unwrapping, adjusting lighting and rendering settings. For a 2D artist looking to explore 3D, this logic-heavy, technical process becomes a real barrier.



Gaku Tada is a Japanese artist who spent years at Hollywood visual effects studios including Digital Domain (US), ILM (Canada), and Weta Digital (New Zealand), contributing to films such as *Avatar*, *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*, and *Iron Man*. Feeling constrained by the technical demands of VFX, he shifted toward a fusion of digital and traditional painting and developed Deep Paint.

Deep Paint is a user-friendly Blender plugin that lets creators skip traditional modelling entirely. Instead, they draw strokes directly, which are then converted into renderable geometry as the foundation for illustration. In this session, Gaku introduced the basics of drawing and colouring in 3D space using Grease Pencil, then demonstrated how to convert

those strokes into mesh structures before moving into Deep Paint's material painting and detailing features.

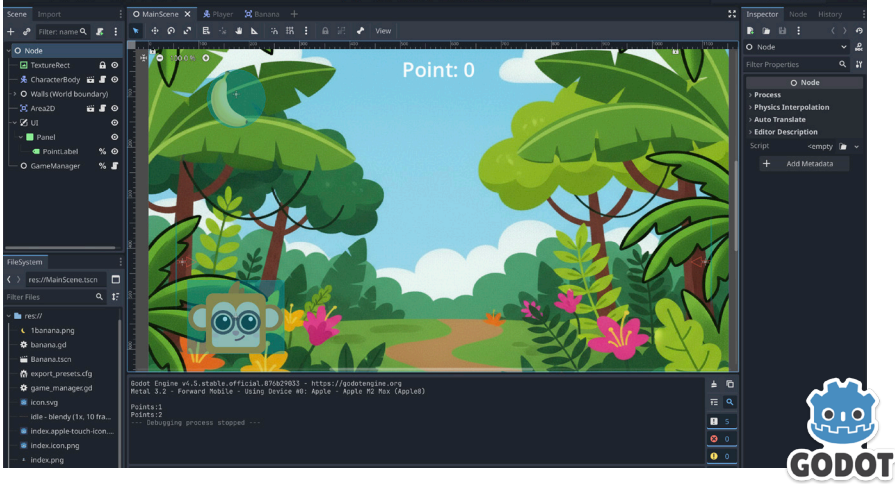
DPM (Deep Paint Material) is a stylised shader built on vertex painting, letting creators paint directly onto a mesh. With built-in brushes, it supports a wide range of painting styles, from noisy watercolour splashes to smooth, delicate shading transitions, giving 3D models a hand-painted quality that retains the warmth of traditional art.

Gaku's plugin gives creators a fluid, approachable entry point into 3D, wielding their brushes to depict endless possibilities.

3. Using Blender in Solo or Small Teams for Creating Animations

Whether you're working solo or in a small studio, how do you produce a high volume of animation content without compromising quality?

Olivier Amrein is a Swiss-based 3D artist and Art Director at Dreamscape Immersive who has lectured and taught across Switzerland, China, the Netherlands, Brazil, and Russia. His session offered a practical creative framework for animation production: efficient asset management through Blender's library system, techniques for generating multiple key shots from a single library setup, methods for integrating AI into both asset creation and video animation, and



a full walkthrough of the library to scene generation to AI video pipeline.

Blender's collection system organises complex scenes through a hierarchy, with a master collection containing sub-collections, allowing control over the visibility of nested groups. The library concept is equally straightforward: build a master asset library containing characters, props, and materials, then reference those assets across separate scene files. Any update to the master library automatically syncs across every scene that uses it.

Olivier then demonstrated the workflow in Blender: building a scene, placing a rigged robot character, adjusting poses and camera angles, and rendering a series of images. Those renders were fed into an AI tool with prompts to generate video, before final editing was done in Blender's Video Sequence Editor.

Olivier's session went beyond technique. It taught learners to think in multiples, combining tools creatively to maximise output within limited resources.

4. Quick Dev Quest: Your First Godot Game

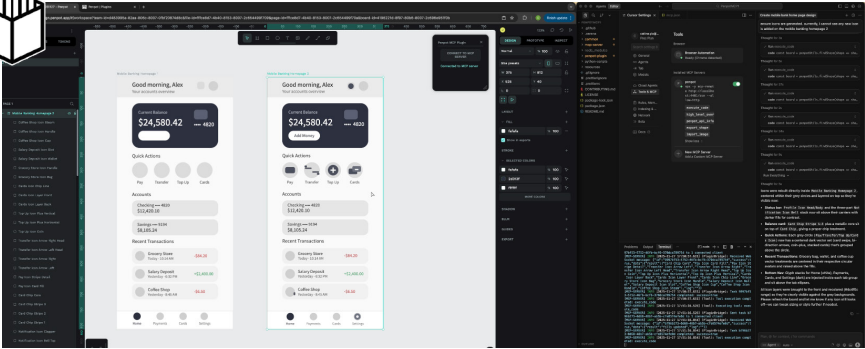
"I've always wanted to make a game, but I just don't know how to code." It's a thought that stops many aspiring developers before they even begin.

Godot is a free, open-source game engine that is royalty-free, MIT-licensed, and built on a lightweight, flexible architecture. When Unity sparked controversy with its runtime fee policy in 2023, Godot emerged as one of the most popular alternatives

for indie developers. Games published on Steam using Godot grew from 47 in 2020 to over 1,500 by 2025, and high-profile titles like Slay the Spire 2 chose Godot, cementing its status as a go-to engine for indie developers and studios alike.

Also taught by Catina Yiu, this session continued her accessible, learner-centred approach. After setting out the session's goals, she walked through core game development concepts, Godot's node and scene structure, interface navigation, and the basics of GDScript, building an understanding of the engine's underlying logic before moving into actual game creation.

The mid-section targeted a working 2D game, with no coding or art background required. Starting from scratch within a single session, learners built a fully playable 2D prototype. The first part covered gameplay mechanics before learners set up a new project on their own machines, importing prepared assets: setting a background, adding a player character and objects, and creating the necessary nodes.



The highlight of the session was the second part, where learners wrote movement scripts in GDScript, applying common code logic to control object variables, setting up signal connections to detect collisions and add points, and building a game manager to track and calculate scores. GDScript is a Python-like language designed specifically for game development, and its readable syntax makes it easy for beginners to follow.

The third part moved into game testing, where learners used Node.js and Visual Studio Code to set up a local server environment and configure terminal operations. The session closed with a recap of key concepts, the full game development workflow, and resources from the Godot community.

The Value of Open-Source Tools

The true value of open-source tools lies in the communities behind them.

As closed-source tools repeatedly raise their subscription prices, unpredictable pricing decisions have eroded creator confidence, pushing more and more people toward open-source. Open-source ecosystems are driven by real community needs: continuously iterated, updated, and shaped by the people who actually use them. When tools fit naturally into a creator's daily workflow and creativity is no longer constrained by the tool itself, creators explore further, building plugins, sharing workflows, and even selling their own work. Creating in a way that benefits more people is the true value of open-source.



2025 3D Creative Talent Showcase Competition: Advancing Open-Source Education to Tell Stories of Chinese Culture in 3D



Editor: Catina Yiu

Organised by CGGE, the "2025 3D Creative Talent Showcase Competition" has successfully concluded. Building on the teaching and competition experience of the 2024 edition themed "Our Space Dream," this year's competition shifts its focus to "Chinese Culture", moving from a collective dream of gazing at the stars to a personal exploration of cultural heritage. The competition uses Blender, a free and open-source 3D creation tool, as the designated platform, encouraging students and young creators aged 9 to 18

to depict historical narratives, folk legends, craft aesthetics, and regional cultures through 3D modelling or animation.

Building on the Past: From Space Dreams to Cultural Roots

The 2024 edition demonstrated what students could achieve with Blender. The "Digital Dreamers" Blender public-interest course, run by the Krystal Institute, enabled over 40 students aged 9 to 20 to grasp the fundamentals of Blender and produce space-themed works within a short period. In 2025, this educational framework extends to the cultural domain, inviting more young creators to interpret Chinese

culture through digital tools and find a mode of expression that bridges tradition and innovation for a new generation.

Unlike purely technical competitions, theme-driven competitions challenge creators to research cultural backgrounds, clarify cultural contexts, and translate abstract concepts into tangible creative work, making 3D tools a medium for cultural learning and expression. Participants may also make reasonable use of AI-generative tools to assist with fabric textures and surface mapping, enabling faster creative exploration and improved production efficiency.



A Forward-Thinking Pedagogical Strategy: Igniting the Next Generation's Creative Dreams Through Open Source

The DECT curriculum framework integrates open-source digital tools, humanities literacy, and creative thinking to empower students to express ideas in a digital language. In an era of rapid advancement in artificial intelligence and the digital economy, cross-disciplinary integration stands as one of the most valued competencies in the future job market and creative industries.

A comprehensive educational pipeline systematically elevates 3D creation from a niche hobby to scalable literacy training. As a free and open-source tool, Blender not only lowers the barrier to entry but also enables under-resourced schools to genuinely bring digital creation into the curriculum. Through online lectures, student summer camps, and school-based pre-competition training, the organiser has established a clear learning pathway: one where digital tool learning transcends technical practice and becomes embedded in the process of cultural identity formation.

6 Sessions of “Exploring The Digital World with Blender” Online Seminars

Designed specifically for primary and secondary school teachers, these train-the-trainer sessions share how to integrate Blender with creative pedagogy to inspire student interest in Chinese culture.

AI + Blender Summer Elite Camp

A comprehensive 30-hour course covering AI tool applications, 3D modeling, and

animation production, enabling students to progress from foundational to advanced skills while generating creative concepts and assets.

Law Ting Pong Secondary School Blender Pre-Competition Training

An intensive 11.5-hour program covering 3D modeling and animation production, enabling rapid proficiency in Blender. Twenty students participated in the "3D Creative Talent Showcase Competition 2025," with two students receiving Merit Awards.

Student Group Gold Award: Qilin Emissary Lin Qi'er — A Digital Interpretation of a Traditional Symbol

The Gold Award winner is the "Team Lion Dance" from Pui Ching Middle School



(Macau), comprising two secondary school students and one supervising teacher. Their artwork is an exceptionally creative Chinese-style character design, rich in detail with a distinctive style and remarkable expressiveness.

The art of lion dance performance originated in Guangdong and holds deep roots in the folk culture of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao region, having been inscribed on China's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The two secondary school students transformed this cultural symbol into a modern 3D character language, weaving recognisable cultural elements (cloud scroll patterns, Chinese knots, and bronze bells) into the accessories of the Qilin Fist Messenger character. This creative reinterpretation of their own cultural heritage powerfully embodies the ethos of this competition.

Open Group Gold Award: Xuannü, the Divine Goddess of the Nine Heavens, Clasps the Moon — A Synthesis of Technique and Aesthetics

The Gold Award-winning work represents a distinct creative achievement of its own.

On a technical level, the character model is impeccably proportioned, garment textures are rendered with finesse, and accessories are depicted in exceptional detail. The creator's high-level rigging



brings the character to vivid, lifelike expression. On a cultural level, the work draws on the image of Jiutian Xuannü, the goddess of the nine heavens in ancient Chinese mythology, soaring high above the earth with her gaze cast downward, symbolising the Chinese people's enduring spirit of exploration and paying tribute to the depth, breadth, and vitality of Chinese culture.

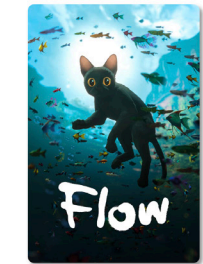
From Competition to Blender Conference: A Creative Journey

The Blender Conference offers students and creators an exceptional opportunity to step beyond the classroom, onto a larger stage, and into a wider world.

This year's award ceremony was held at BCON25, marking the first time the Blender Conference has crossed to Asia,

making its debut in Shenzhen, Asia's technology capital. Having their work seen on an international platform attended by global developers, artists, and industry leaders is a profoundly meaningful experience for young participants. The Open Category Gold Award winner will also receive a three-day pass to the 2026 Blender Conference in Amsterdam, with the opportunity to visit the Netherlands in person, gain first-hand insight into industry developments, technical trends, and community culture, and broaden their international perspective.

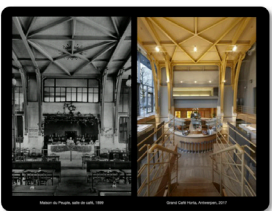
From outreach activities and student programmes to creative competitions and international exchange, the organiser is building an ecosystem hub that connects local talent, the global community, and the creative industry. At a time when commercial tools dominate the educational market, open-source tools remain a direction worth exploring, enabling more people to realise their creative aspirations through accessible tools and systematic learning.



Analyzing "Flow" and its cultural symbolism



Boosting creative efficiency with Blender and AI tools



Blender and digital cultural heritage



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Interview with Hui Ting, Producer of *Dasheng Rises*

Editor: Vincent Yu, Timothy Tan

Eleven years ago, *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* was propelled to success through overwhelming word-of-mouth support from audiences, becoming a milestone in the development of Chinese animation. Eleven years later, *Dasheng Rises* is scheduled for release on July 10, 2026, once again placing the Monkey King at the center of the story. According to producer Hui Ting, this time the Monkey King is not simply “returning”; rather, he is rediscovering himself within a complex game of identity, responsibility, and destiny. Produced by SKYFILM, the film continues the studio’s long-term philosophy of building Eastern fantasy worlds through deep cultural research and industrialized production methodologies.

CGGE: What has been the biggest change in China’s animation industry over the past decade?

Hui Ting: There has never been a single leader driving the industry forward. Instead, many pioneers and creative teams have collectively contributed to its growth. As talent, investment, and production infrastructure entered the industry, both artistic expression and technological execution gained new possibilities. Audiences have also become more sophisticated. They are no longer satisfied with simply celebrating the “rise of Chinese animation”; they now expect compelling storytelling, strong characters, high-quality audiovisual presentation, and world-class production standards to come together as a complete package.

CGGE: Has your creative approach evolved in response to market changes?

Hui Ting: Absolutely. Over the past eleven years, social sentiments, creators, and audiences have all changed. We



have continuously strengthened the fundamentals—architectural aesthetics, character performance, music, cinematography, and camera language—while constantly refining the film’s thematic expression. Our goal is for the Monkey

King to remain rooted in the classical source material while also speaking to contemporary audiences.

CGGE: How can Chinese mythology become accessible to global audiences?



Hui Ting: The key is not to simply pile up cultural symbols. What matters is genuinely understanding the lifestyle, values, and spiritual essence behind the culture, then abstracting and reconstructing those elements into modern storytelling. Global storytelling must begin with themes that resonate universally with humanity while remaining firmly grounded in Chinese culture.

CGGE: Do you think AI will diminish creative authenticity?

Hui Ting: We embrace AI. It cannot replace human originality, but it can provide inspiration, references, and creative assets that help ideas become visible more quickly. As technology lowers barriers to entry, more people will have the opportunity to participate in filmmaking and content creation.

CGGE: What production achievements or innovations should audiences look forward to most in this film?

Hui Ting: The team conducted extensive research into ancient texts and historical artifacts. We first abstracted the source materials and then reinterpreted them visually to build a fully realized world. We also spent nearly six months rehearsing with stage actors, transforming live-action performance techniques into an animation performance language.

The film contains nearly 900 shots, and the camera work is intentionally restrained, allowing space for both performance and music to take center stage. The score is built on a symphonic orchestral foundation and incorporates more than a dozen traditional Chinese instruments, each associated with specific characters and emotional themes.

CGGE: Will the film eventually be released on international streaming platforms?

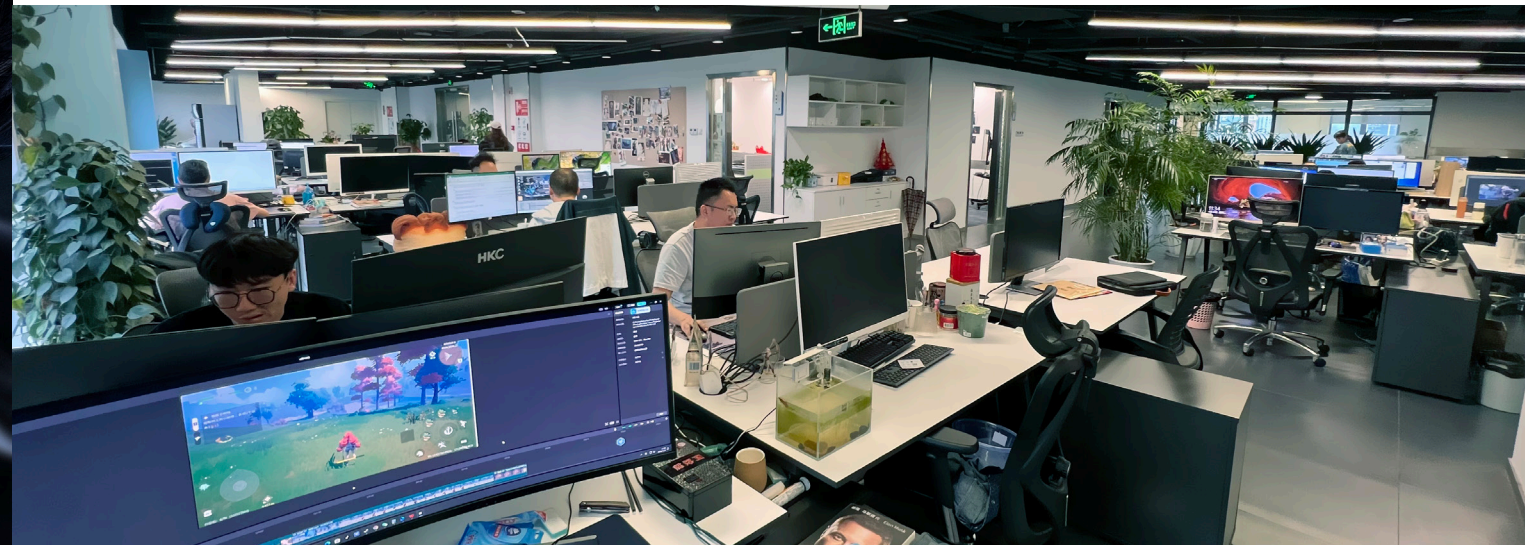
Hui Ting: Yes, but theatrical release remains our priority. The film has a strong cinematic quality designed for the big screen, and many details are meant to be experienced in a theater environment. Afterward, we hope to reach broader global audiences through streaming platforms.

Conclusion

When asked what advice she would give to young creators, Hui Ting brought the answer back to the core of filmmaking: "Find yourself."

Beyond trends and labels, maintaining one's own creative identity remains the true starting point for original animation to continue moving forward.

Building Dreams for Players: The Growth Story of Yunshi Technology



Editor: Sophia Zhu

Chongqing Yunshi Technology Co., Ltd., a game company dedicated to creating immersive sandbox survival mobile games for global players, has delivered unforgettable gaming experiences through titles such as *Guardians of the Ice* and *Path of Rune*, thanks to their high-degree-of-freedom gameplay and immersive experiences. Among these, *Icebound Guardian* has been particularly outstanding. This medieval sandbox survival mobile game was officially released by Leiting Games in 2021. Since its launch, it has achieved nearly 10 million global downloads and generated close to RMB 200 million in revenue, earning a user score of 4.8 on both Google Play and the App Store.

Starting from a small independent development team, Yunshi Technology has gradually grown into an integrated game company covering the entire process of project initiation, R&D, art, development, marketing, and launch. How did it achieve leapfrog growth in just a few short years? This spring, the company's

new masterpiece *Darklord: Vampire Survival* has officially launched. Can it continue the momentum of blockbuster success and further expand market performance?

Today, we are honored to invite Mr. Li Pengkun, Founder and CEO of the company, to look back on the company's growth journey—from outsourced "behind-the-scenes" work to becoming an emerging player with its own IP, from relocating from Shenzhen and Guangzhou to settling in Chongqing. How has this entrepreneur, driven by his original passion for games, achieved the breakthrough from OEM to self-developed titles, and from regional to global reach? Let's step into his story.

CGGE: Could you briefly introduce your company's development history, core team DNA, and core creative philosophy?

Li Pengkun: Our team has been deeply engaged in the industry for eight years. The core members possess over a decade of experience in PC game development and CG film and animation. This cross-disciplinary background gives

us naturally high professional sensitivity and quality standards in visual storytelling and technical fundamentals.

In terms of creative philosophy, we have always maintained a "global" perspective. We believe that truly great games should not be limited by cultural boundaries, so we have been committed to creating products that resonate emotionally with players worldwide and fully respect gameplay. This original intention has determined that we won't chase short-term trends; instead, we choose to continuously deepen our efforts in areas where we excel.

The most intuitive manifestation of this in-depth cultivation is our product matrix. From our early survival-exploration titles to the maturing *Dusk of Dragons: Survivors* and *Path of Rune*, and now the fully evolved *Darklord: Vampire Survival*, we have always focused on the vertical track of "sandbox survival open world." Each new work is an iteration and surpassing of its predecessor. We do not pursue a sudden explosion of fame; rather, we aim to be a long-distance runner in this niche—one who can endure



solitude and outlast time.

CGGE: Having deeply engaged the mobile game track for many years, what sets your core competitiveness apart from other similar companies in the industry?

Li Pengkun: Our core competitiveness is rooted in extreme focus on a "vertical niche." In an era where major studios are expanding horizontally, we have chosen a path that goes deeper and deeper. With three consecutive products all anchored in the "open world" and "sandbox survival" track, this focus has allowed us to accumulate deep technical barriers and a unique aesthetic depth.

Compared to other similar companies, we are more daring in exploring an "independent" art style. We do not blindly follow mainstream commercial art directions; instead, we have chosen a gothic realistic style with stronger visual impact. This distinctive identity is directly reflected in market performance: our user acquisition costs are far below the industry average, while our organic traffic share is extremely high. Because what we pursue is not just making a game, but cultivating a community of seed users who share a common aesthetic identity.

CGGE: In the next 3–5 years, what are the key directions of your company's overall strategic plan (niche deepening, market expansion, user cultivation)?

Li Pengkun: With the official launch of our new title *Darklord: Vampire Survival* in spring 2026, our strategic blueprint has become even clearer. Over the next three to five years, our keyword is "evolution." On one hand, we will continue to deepen our presence in the mid-to-heavy sandbox survival RPG space, consistently strengthening our technical barriers. On the other hand, we have keenly observed the vast potential of casual players, and will explore "lightweight" adaptations of our established survival mechanics to expand our audience boundaries. In terms of market strategy, we will further enhance our self-research and self-publishing capabilities in global markets, using more refined commercial operations to give our vertical-track products longer-lasting



vitality.

CGGE: What was the core original intention behind your newly launched mobile game?

Li Pengkun: Our previous title, *Dusk of Dragons: Survivors*, has been steadily operating for four years, consistently receiving high scores and recommendations on multiple global platforms. The real feedback from millions of loyal players has reinforced our confidence: this is not only a track full of potential but also a solid ground for our core competitiveness.

The project initiation of *Darklord: Vampire Survival* stemmed from an internal drive for "self-iteration." As a sequel, it achieves

a comprehensive leap forward while inheriting the essence of its predecessor. We have completely restructured real-time combat feedback, elevated visual fidelity to new heights, and significantly expanded gameplay depth. Through this, we aim to prove to both the industry and players that in this niche, we still possess the ability to continuously break through ceilings and set new benchmarks for sequels.

CGGE: Which core audience segments does this product precisely target? How does it cater to current players' needs, in terms of art style, gameplay, and narrative adaptations?

Li Pengkun: This time, we have focused on the globally resonant theme of "vampires." Compared to traditional survival themes, vampires inherently carry an aesthetic, realistic, and mysterious undertone that aligns perfectly with our pursuit of extreme visual experiences. To meet players' desire for immersion, we have carried out deep "aesthetic adaptation" in art style, striving to present the game as an interactive gothic film experience. In narrative expression, we no longer rely solely on text; instead, we use environmental storytelling and gameplay integration to let players subtly experience the sense of class ascension—from a mere survivor to a Darklord.

CGGE: Compared to traditional mobile game development processes, have there been any optimizations or innovations in process and technology for this project, such as the use of AI tools? Will AI become a core strategic direction for your R&D in the future?

Li Pengkun: To be honest, AI tools have been deeply integrated into our R&D process, especially in the stages of concept art, story animation, and script pre-production, greatly boosting productivity.

However, we have always been clearly aware that AI is a double-edged sword. We have observed that overseas players are sensitive to or even resentful of pure AI-generated assets. Therefore,

we have established a strict "filtering mechanism": we try not to let AI-generated content directly enter the final game. Instead, we use it as a draft, followed by manual secondary polishing and stylized reshaping. We want players to ultimately feel the emotional warmth of the creators, not the cold output of algorithms.

In the future, AI will be a powerful tool for efficient creation, but "human" aesthetics and uniqueness will always remain the core soul of our R&D.

CGGE: Players today have increasingly high demands for game quality, original content, and long-term service. What do you think is the key to breaking through in the industry in the future?

Li Pengkun: As AI gradually levels the playing field for art quality, the "passing line" for all products will be raised across the board. In this context, I believe the key to breaking through lies in "stylization" and "uniqueness."

High-quality content is no longer a plus; it is the entry ticket. What truly allows a product to stand out in the red ocean is its irreplaceable brand personality and IP recognition. How to make players recognize your style at a glance, and feel the sincerity of original content within that style—this is the core issue for long-term service in the future.

CGGE: Apart from the domestic market, what are your insights on the global

development of Chinese mobile games?

Li Pengkun: We began our overseas expansion around 2020, when the market was still a blue ocean. But now it has entered an extremely competitive "head-on collision" stage. The overseas market is no longer a place for "easy gains"; it is a comprehensive test of product quality and global operational capabilities.

Nevertheless, I remain optimistic. As long as you can find your own niche and deeply cultivate your vertical domain, there are still huge opportunities for Chinese games going overseas. The key lies in two points: first, whether you can understand your global players better than local teams; second, whether you have the ability to consistently produce high-quality original content.

Starting from outsourcing and breaking through via self-developed titles, Yunshi Technology has spent ten years proving a simple yet steadfast belief: in the world of games, only passion and focus can outrun time. Starting from love and standing on quality, Yunshi Technology's development path is also a microcosm of how small and medium-sized domestic game companies are breaking through. We look forward to seeing more surprises from this game company deeply rooted in the sandbox survival track.



Original IP “Panda Pange” Embarks on a New Journey in 2026



■ Short-Form Video Series: Pange the Super Dad

Editor: Cloudy Poon

Since the establishment of Sichuan Hongyao Cultural Communication Co., Ltd. in 2012, the company has remained committed to the development of the original “Panda Pange IP Family”, focusing on China’s homegrown animation IP sector. Over fourteen years of dedicated cultivation and industry experience, Hongyao Culture has continuously built a comprehensive full-spectrum IP operation ecosystem covering content creation, consumer products, brand licensing, and location-based entertainment, transforming Panda Pange from a single

cartoon character into a culturally rich and commercially vibrant original Chinese IP. In 2026, responding to emerging industry opportunities and evolving consumer demand, the Panda Pange IP will focus on two key pillars—creative content innovation and consumer product commercialization—leveraging technology-driven development and market-oriented strategies to achieve breakthroughs in both brand value and commercial growth.

I. Deep AI Integration: Building a New Creative Content Ecosystem

In 2026, Hongyao Culture will closely follow global trends in the digital creative

industry by fully integrating cutting-edge AIGC (AI-Generated Content) technologies throughout the Panda Pange content development pipeline. This initiative aims to overcome the efficiency limitations and creative constraints of traditional content production, enabling the IP to evolve from a single content format into a diversified content ecosystem.

At the core content creation level, the company has established a dedicated AI Creative Studio Team to produce scalable serialized content with greater efficiency. Through AI-assisted scriptwriting, storyboard development, character



■ Panda Pange Chinese Zodiac Plush Collection

■ Panda Pange Hip-Hop Adventure Blind Box Series

modeling, animation production, rendering and visual effects, and accelerated short-form content creation, Hongyao Culture is significantly reducing production cycles for lightweight digital content. These productions will be distributed across major social media platforms, including Douyin (TikTok China), Xiaohongshu (RED), and Bilibili, strengthening online visibility and audience engagement for the IP. The company will continue launching original short-form content that combines entertainment value with cultural storytelling, enhancing both the distinctiveness and cultural resonance of the Panda Pange brand.

II. Consumer Products Centered on Plush Toys and Blind Boxes

Targeting younger consumer demographics, Hongyao Culture will collaborate with state-owned investment partners to launch a series of BJD (Ball-Jointed Doll) blind-box collectibles and AI companion plush products. Incorporating contemporary Chinese design aesthetics, the company will implement a rigorous product quality management system and partner with premium supply-chain manufacturers to ensure high production standards. Through this approach, Panda Pange merchandise aims to establish a market reputation for both exceptional quality and strong value for money.

Continuing the Expansion of a Chinese Original IP

After fourteen years of dedication to the original IP sector, Hongyao Culture continues to regard innovation and

creativity as its core driving force, while high-quality cultural content remains its primary competitive advantage. Step by step, the company has expanded both the industrial ecosystem and commercial boundaries of the Panda Pange IP.

As 2026 marks the beginning of China’s Fifteenth Five-Year Development Plan, Hongyao Culture stands at a new stage of growth and will continue refining its end-to-end IP operation system, striving to establish a benchmark model for China’s original animation IP industry ecosystem. The Panda Pange IP remains deeply

rooted in Chinese culture, exploring the contemporary relevance of panda culture and its potential for international communication. By promoting China’s outstanding traditional culture and advancing original Chinese IP onto the global stage, Hongyao Culture will continue to innovate, move forward with confidence, and write a new chapter in the story of Chinese original intellectual property.



■ Short-Form Video Series: Little Pange

In the Age of AI, Does Film Pre-Production Still Have Value?

CGGE'S DIALOGUE WITH MAJA, ART DIRECTOR OF THE TELEVISION SERIES THE THREE-BODY PROBLEM



Editor: Celia Li, Vincent Yu

Many people assume that as AI becomes stronger, film pre-production, concept design, and storyboarding will become easier to replace. Ma Jia (MAJA) - Art Director of the television series *The Three-Body Problem*, VFX Designer for the feature film *The Stage* - sees it differently. The faster the tools become, the more important early-stage judgment becomes. Real film pre-production is not just about drawing a few attractive images. Before a

project begins, it means thinking through the technical plan, shooting method, visual direction, and execution risks.

Since entering film art and visual effects concept work in 2008, he has gone through hand drawing, digital painting, 3D previs, virtual production, and AI workflows. Tools keep changing generation after generation, but the deepest abilities remain the same: aesthetic judgment, cultural knowledge, real project experience, and the ability to evaluate an image. AI can generate one

hundred images. The difficult question is whether you can tell which one works and which one is only superficially attractive.

That is why he especially reminds students not to abandon drawing and real experience just because AI has arrived. Painting stroke by stroke, observing the physical world, and understanding light, shadow, and structure slowly build the ability to recognize quality. Without that ability, creators can easily be led around by the tool. Efficiency may seem higher, but the standard for choosing what is



good may be lost.

His distinction between concept images, mood images, and storyboards is also useful for newcomers trying to understand pre-production. Storyboards solve story progression and camera performance. Concept design solves structure, detail, and execution. Mood images are closer to seeing the final visual temperament of the film in advance. These are not just random drawings. They provide direction for the teams that come later.

As for Blender, 3D, and AI, he does not see them as replacements for one another. 2D, 3D, and AI are more like an integrated system. 3D strengthens spatial ability, AI accelerates experimentation, but what ultimately determines the height of a work is still the creator's unified judgment of narrative, worldbuilding, and visual language.

This also leads to the question of education. MAJA believes schools and training programs should not teach only software. They should help young people develop understanding, build self-learning ability, and encounter real projects during their most valuable stage of growth. Otherwise, by the time students finish learning one round of tools, the industry

may already have moved to the next generation.

So when CGGE asked about young creators in the OriginCG community, the topic was not just a simple "message to students." MAJA said the most important thing during student years is to do what you love with a certain purity: experience



boldly, feel deeply, and turn passion into something real. What a community like OriginCG can do is receive and support that passion. For people interested in CG, games, animation, and moving images, it can help them do more than watch the industry change from the outside. Through real cases, interviews, and learning columns, they can see how these abilities actually enter projects. It becomes a bridge from interest to finished work. In the full interview, MAJA also discusses education, industry change, and how young people should face AI. For those who are still learning to create, this kind of judgment may shape the future earlier than any single software technique.



Watch the full video interview on <https://origincg.cn/>.

From Campus to Industry: Forging a Sustainable IP Business with Passion — An Interview with Seeksky & Ensemble Animation Club



Editor: Sophia Zhu

From two small club rooms at Nanjing University of Science and Technology in 2002, Seeksky and Ensemble Animation Club has evolved over two decades into a cultural brand with a complete IP ecosystem across the Yangtze River Delta. Starting with two affiliated clubs focused on original Chinese animation and cosplay, it moved from campus to industry and achieved leapfrog growth by launching new brands in Shanghai and building a full industrial chain.

By integrating original creation and derivatives, expanding from campus communities to the physical Newgoods Club store, and forming a regional fan network, the brand has witnessed the rise of China's ACG industry and pioneered

the transformation from a student club to a commercial brand.

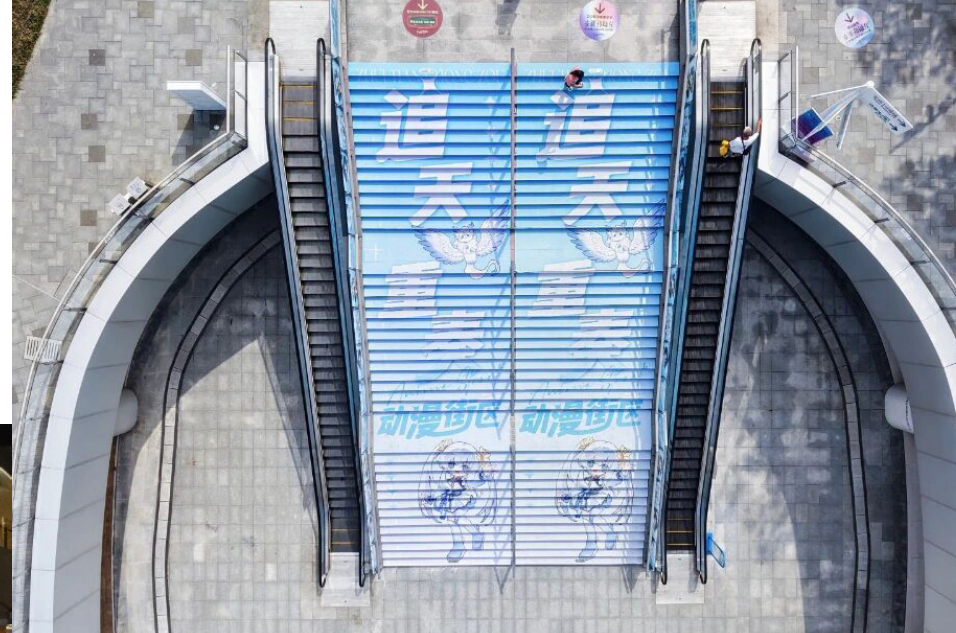
With the 2025 opening of Newgoods Club at Shanghai Book City as a new starting point, the brand is implementing a three-year strategic plan: entering the merchandise sector, building an OMO model, and cooperating with industry leaders, striving to become the standard-setter for China's ACG districts. CGGE held an in-depth interview with Kuikui of Seeksky & Ensemble to explore its growth from campus club to industry benchmark.

CGGE: From the parallel existence of “Seeksky” and “Ensemble” at NJUST in 2002, to establishing a studio two decades later and launching an anime district and goods store brand, you have completed the initial transformation from a campus club to a commercial organization. What

was the turning point that made you turn this passion into a sustainable career?

Kuikui: The essence of this endeavor has never changed: it's the purest love and devotion to anime shared by those young students from NJUST. Back when we founded the two clubs — Seeksky, focused on original anime, and Ensemble, dedicated to cosplay — our original aspiration was simple and unwavering: to build a “home” where fellow ACG enthusiasts could create together and connect with each other.

First, over twenty years of industry experience gave us the ability to turn ideals into reality. Many former members now hold key roles in animation, film and gaming, with deep insight into content, users and industry rules. From “powered by passion”, they now possess a deep



understanding of content creation, user needs, and industry dynamics — and have the ability to transform that youthful dream into a commercial entity that can continuously serve fellow enthusiasts and spread that same passion.

Second, we identified industry pain points: many Chinese IPs rely on simplistic commercialization without a complete value chain, while fans increasingly demand legitimate, experience-oriented offline spaces. Third, ACG culture has become mainstream youth culture with over 400 million users. We hope to elevate ACG into the mainstream cultural context and build a sustainable offline home for fans.

This transition was driven by long-term passion, industry accumulation and era opportunities, transforming our campus dream into a career that serves more fans.

CGGE: Regarding your industrial layout, why did you choose Shanghai Book City, a downtown cultural landmark, as the location for your goods store? What was the most important consideration? What operational advantages and challenges does this location bring?

Kuikui: We are not merely a retail brand. Our core goal is to empower IP creators and turn quality content into sustainable value, following the principle of “one core, multiple endpoints” — never straying from the content core. This is embedded in our

DNA, and it is also what distinguishes us from other similar brands.

The key consideration was cultural resonance. As a national cultural landmark, Shanghai Book City shares the same roots with youth content culture. Its official background strongly endorses our products and helps us break ACG circle barriers and reach wider audiences. This helps us break down the barriers of the ACG circle, achieving genuine cultural crossover and user expansion.

The main challenge is that many visitors are unfamiliar with merchandise culture. We use scene design, content displays and interactive guidance to help them understand that collecting goods is a form of emotional and cultural consumption, just like reading or collecting cultural products.

CGGE: In your opinion, what is the most critical step in converting a successful anime IP from creative concept to physical goods that consumers are willing to purchase? How do you convert bookstore visitors into ACG consumers and turn IP creativity into high-premium products?

Kuikui: Our core logic is: content as the root, goods as emotional carriers, and space as emotion amplifiers. The most critical step is translating the IP's emotional value into product design. Fans do not buy merchandise for the

physical item, but for the emotions, love for characters, and sense of identity the IP brings. The key is to translate fans' deepest feelings, classic scenes and character charms into design and craftsmanship. Simply printing a character's face makes soulless goods with no emotional value, which fans will not pay a premium for.

We always build emotional connections first, then guide consumption. Our store offers free photo spots, pop-up displays, message walls and fan exchange areas for pressure-free experiences. This emotional value is what supports premium pricing.

CGGE: As ACG culture grows popular, competition in the merchandise sector becomes fierce. With over twenty years of club experience, how do you precisely serve hardcore fans and new-generation casual users? Please share your insights in product selection, event planning and user psychology.

Kuikui: Hardcore fans pursue scarcity, professionalism and belonging; casual users prefer low thresholds, attractive design and stress-free enjoyment. We provide targeted services for both groups. In product selection, we develop exclusive items for hidden-gem IPs and launch nostalgic commemorative goods for long-term fans, such as *Mole's World*; while designing practical, aesthetic products for general visitors, especially students. In events, we hold member-only gatherings and provide consignment spaces, turning fans from consumers into participants.

In user engagement, we combine local events such as the Shanghai Book Fair and World Book Day, and rely on our experienced team that truly understands fan culture. Our 20+ years of club history means we have grown up together with generation after generation of fellow enthusiasts. This sense of shared journey and resonance is something many new brands find hard to replicate, and it is the core foundation of our ability to retain users.



CGGE: Do you believe offline merchandise will continue to grow? Will Chinese animation merchandise become mainstream? What is the biggest challenge facing the industry?

Kuikui: We are confident that offline merchandise will enter a stage of high-quality, branded and standardized growth, supported by rising user demand, standardized supply and offline recovery. There are three core reasons for this judgment: First, user demand is continuously increasing. Second, the supply side is rapidly becoming more regulated. Third, the offline economy is steadily recovering.

Chinese IPs including *A Mortal's Journey to Immortality*, *Ne Zha*, *The Three-Body Problem* and *The Wandering Earth* are now competitive globally. The younger generation grew up with domestic content, and China's supply chain leads the world in design and quality. Chinese ACG merchandise will surely become mainstream.

The real challenge is not competition, but short-sighted brands chasing quick profits and damaging user trust. We hope to work with partners to improve industry standards for healthy long-term development.

Looking back at our more than 20 years of development, our core principle has never

changed: no matter how far we go on the path of commercialization, we must never lose our original passion.

CGGE: What is your long-term vision? What preparations have you made? Which teams do you hope to cooperate with to realize this dream?

Kuikui: Our core vision is the rise of Chinese animation. We aim to build a comprehensive standard system centered on IP content and rooted in user experience, to be applied to China's offline ACG cultural spaces. This system would cover:

- Standards for content legitimacy and IP incubation;
- Standards for spatial environments and user experience;
- Standards for product development and quality control;
- Standards for community operations and fan services;
- And, integrating all of the above, sustainable commercial standards.

An ACG district should not be an isolated commercial entity. Instead, it must be deeply integrated with industry development and urban cultural construction, becoming a part of the city's culture and helping to disseminate and ground Chinese animation culture.

Despite projects from Shanghai Book City

to the anime district at Jiaxing Railway Station to official booths at several top-tier comic conventions across the country and even at the CIIE (China International Import Expo), we still lack professional commercial operation experience. What we have done so far is still essentially club-level practice. We sincerely welcome partners with business expertise to join us.

We refuse hasty expansion and follow a three-phase plan: refine community models, launch 3–5 pilots in the Yangtze River Delta, and go global via CIIE for cultural export.

We will unite global creators, clubs and independent artists, embrace AI innovation, promote outstanding works and nurture new talent to achieve the real rise of Chinese animation.

At the end of the interview, we deeply feel that the growth of the Club is not only a microcosm of the transformation from a campus club to a commercial brand, but also a witness to China's ACG industry moving from immaturity to maturity. Guided by persistence and passion, and with the collaboration of professional partners, they will eventually develop a standard system for China's offline ACG spaces, allowing Chinese ACG culture to take root in cities and go global, letting more people feel its power and warmth. This persistence — beginning with passion, faithful to original aspiration, and fulfilled with responsibility — will surely become the most touching footnote in the development of the Chinese ACG industry.



From "a Single Beam of Light" to "Ten-Thousand-Scale Armor": The Two-Decade Surge and Future Journey of Chinese CG Animated Films

Editor: Sophia Zhu

In 2000, Chinese animation was in a barren "age of wilderness" – animation was not even a proper academic discipline, online teaching resources were scarce, and pioneers could only grope in the dark.

Twenty-five years later, Chinese animation stands at the center of the world stage. *Ne Zha 2* has not only topped the global animated film box office chart but also, with over 15.9 billion yuan in earnings, shown the world the brilliance of Chinese animation's "Ten-Thousand-Scale Armor."

Looking back at the ups and downs of the past two decades, Chinese CG animated films have traveled a stirring road from "pioneering" to "breakout" – a road that now points to a future full of confidence.

Starting Point: Trailblazing Hardship – *Thru The Moebius Strip* and the "Whampoa Military Academy"

The true starting point of Chinese CG animated films was 2005. That year, GDC (Global Digital Creations Holdings Limited) released *Thru The Moebius Strip*, which was produced for five years with an investment of over 130 million yuan and a team of more than 500 animators. It was China's first true CG animated feature and marked the official entry of Chinese animated films into the CG era. With its sci-fi theme and grand interstellar worldview, the film earned only 3.4 million yuan at the box office – a commercial failure. Yet it was like a pebble thrown into a lake, stirring the first ripples of China's CG animation industry.

The significance of *Thru The Moebius Strip* lies not in its box office numbers but



Poster of *Thru the Moebius Strip*



■ Poster of *Deep Sea*

in "seeding" and "pioneering." In an era when even 3D software tutorials had to be learned from books and by trial-and-error button pressing, GDC established a complete industrial system spanning R&D to production management. It hired overseas experts at high salaries and trained the first generation of Chinese talents in core CG animation techniques. Many key figures who later spread across the industry were all baptized at this "Whampoa Military Academy." More importantly, the film was the first to fully practice the entire CG animation production process – from 3D modeling, animation to rendering – providing invaluable experience for China's animation industry at every step. It is no exaggeration to say that without the "glorious defeat" of *Thru The Moebius Strip*, the spark that later ignited domestic CG animation would never have spread.

Accumulation: Building Strength – From "Kids-Only" to Diversification
From *Thru The Moebius Strip* to 2015, Chinese animation entered a long period of exploration and accumulation. The industry honed its techniques and experimented with various themes. Although no blockbuster phenomenon emerged, a number of excellent animation companies gradually rose to prominence,

gathering strength for the eventual explosion.

During this period, while Chinese animation secured a foothold in the family market, domestic animated films were still labeled "kids-only" in the minds of all-age audiences. However, Fantawild Animation took the lead. Its *Boonie Bears* series, starting with its first theatrical release in 2014, continuously upgraded and broke multiple domestic animation box office records. Not only did it win the hearts of Chinese audiences, but it also successfully reached markets such as Russia, South Korea, and the Philippines, becoming a benchmark for Chinese family animation. At the same time, the GG Bond series, with its adorable characters and lighthearted stories, deepened its presence in the preschool animation market, forming a widely influential IP and driving the industrialization of Chinese animation IPs.

The works of this era showed both initial explorations of local culture and continuous technical refinement. Released in 2016, *Big Fish & Begonia* built a magnificent and fantastical Eastern worldview based on Chinese elements such as Fujian tulou buildings and traditional costumes. Its visually

stunning, almost painterly aesthetic demonstrated the progress of Chinese animation in artistic expression. Despite controversy over its plot logic, the film marked a turning point where Chinese animated cinema began to value cultural connotation and sought to blend traditional culture with modern aesthetics. Meanwhile, emerging studios like Light Chaser Animation came into being, steadily gaining a foothold in the industry through obsessive attention to detail and precise thematic choices, injecting new vitality into the diversification of Chinese animated cinema.

Turning Point: *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* Reignites Confidence
The change came in July 2015. After eight years of polishing and countless episodes of "borrowing money to pay salaries," Tian Xiaopeng stormed into the summer season with *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*. The film, which took eight years of gestation and three years of production, adapted the classic Chinese myth Journey to the West but broke out of traditional narrative frameworks. It created a Sun Wukong who has lost his magical powers, struggles internally, and finally rediscovers his original aspiration – a character arc that resonated with modern values. The production pursued excellence

relentlessly: 80% of the shots were revised repeatedly; the character designs drew on the aesthetics of western animation while preserving the bone structure of east-Asian faces; and the settings referenced China's natural beauty – the Five Sacred Mountains, Guilin's hills, Mount Emei – showcasing traditional Chinese architectural aesthetics to full effect.

In the end, the film earned 956 million yuan at the box office, with over 60% of its audience aged 25 or above. Chinese animators had waited too long for that moment. *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* not only shattered the ceiling for domestic animation; more importantly, it "reignited confidence." It proved to the market that Chinese audiences not only did not reject domestic animation – they were even willing to become "free word-of-mouth advocates" for a well-made domestic animated film. It made capital see the potential of animation, and it taught creators that When Chinese stories are told with genuine dedication, we will naturally win the audience's endorsement. As one industry insider put it, even the day before *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* was released, people still worried that the director might "be found dead in a sewer." But in the end, it became the lever that shifted the fate of the entire industry.

Explosion: A Hundred Flowers Bloom and *Ne Zha* Reaches the Summit
After *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*, Chinese animation entered the fast lane. A succession of excellent works blossomed, forming a diversified landscape.

In 2019, *Ne Zha: Birth of the Demon Child* burst onto the scene. With its core theme "My destiny is mine to decide, not heaven's," it subverted the traditional image of Ne Zha. Thanks to its superb special effects, tight plot, and profound spiritual resonance, it set a new Chinese animated film box office record of 5.035 billion yuan. Six years later, in 2025, *Ne Zha 2* achieved even greater glory. Sweeping the globe with unstoppable momentum, it earned \$2.15 billion worldwide, ranking third among the highest-grossing animated films in global box office history and fifth among all films.



■ Poster of *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*

It became the first Asian animated film to break into the global top ten, shattering the long-standing monopoly of Western animation in the world market.

The success of *Ne Zha 2* is a marker of the maturity of China's animation industrialization system. It is no longer the victory of a single film, but a coordinated battle of an entire industrial chain. Statistics show that the three leading companies – Coloroom Pictures, Fantawild, and Light Chaser – account for over 80% of the total box office of domestic animation. Among them, Coloroom has invested in and built relationships with more than 20 animation enterprises, covering the entire industrial chain from production to IP development to merchandise operations. This kind of systematic combat capability has moved Chinese animation from the era of "fighting alone" into the era of "army-group operations."

Over the past two decades, the development of Chinese animated cinema



■ Poster of *Ne Zha 2*

has been inseparable from the persistence and innovation of a group of outstanding animation companies. Light Chaser Animation has delved into Eastern fantasy themes, creating the *White Snake* series, blending traditional Chinese myths with modern storytelling. Fantawild Animation, through its *Boonie Bears* series, has deeply cultivated the family market, building a complete IP ecosystem that integrates animation, merchandise, and theme parks. Cocoa Animation, centered on the *Ne Zha* franchise, has become a benchmark in Chinese animated cinema with its extreme technical pursuit and innovative narrative methods. The rise of these companies has not only driven the industrialization and standardization of China's animation industry but has also trained a cohort of professional creative, technical, and operational talents, forming a complete animation value chain.

The Future: Cultural Export and the Vast Ocean of Stars
Standing at the pinnacle of global animation box office, we must look not



only at the prosperity before us but also at the road ahead. With the rise of China's comprehensive national power and growing cultural confidence, Chinese culture is attracting increasing attention worldwide. Animated films, as an accessible and widely appealing cultural medium, have become an important bridge for Chinese culture to go global.

First, the diversification of themes is imperative. At present, although the "mythological universe" remains the bedrock of Chinese animation, the risk of thematic homogenization is emerging. Happily, we have seen *I Am What I Am* focus on intangible cultural heritage and tell a realistic story of struggle; *Deep Sea* pioneer a new aesthetic style called "particle ink"; and *The Legend of Hei* win the hearts of audiences at home and abroad with its fresh, clean art style. Future Chinese animation should step out of the "comfort zone" of traditional myths, explore more realistic and sci-fi themes, and show the world that beyond Monkey King and Ne Zha, China has much richer cultural expressions.

Second, building IP ecosystems and going global. The global box office phenomenon of *Ne Zha 2* is just the beginning of Chinese animation's overseas journey. The popularity of the *Boonie Bears* series in Southeast Asia and the success of *The Legend of Hei* in the Japanese market have already proven the potential of Chinese animation to go global – they contain unique Chinese cultural elements while also embodying universal human emotions, allowing them to cross cultural barriers and win recognition from audiences in different countries. To achieve better overseas reach in the future, Chinese animated films must not only maintain their technical

advantages but also focus on innovation in cultural expression. While mining local culture, they should take into account the aesthetic preferences of international audiences, telling Chinese stories in a language the world can understand, and avoiding rigid or stereotyped cultural presentations.

Third, deep integration of technology and art. The explosion of AI technology is profoundly impacting the animation industry. From AI-assisted scriptwriting and special effects generation to the rise of AI-produced comic-dramas, technology is reshaping the way animation is made. Yet no matter how technology evolves, a good story remains the core. Whether it's the modern reinterpretation of traditional characters in the *Ne Zha* series or the delicate portrayal of ordinary figures in *Nobody*, these works all tell us that only works that resonate with universal human emotions can transcend cultures and borders.

Of course, the development of Chinese animated cinema still faces challenges: some works suffer from weak plots and superficial IP exploration; the number of mid-tier hits is insufficient to sustain continuous market expansion; overseas distribution channels are still



underdeveloped; and the breadth and depth of cultural dissemination need improvement. But these challenges are precisely the driving force for the continuous progress of Chinese animated cinema.

Conclusion

From the brave solo exploration of *Thru The Moebius Strip*, to the dramatic comeback of *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*, and to the global triumph of *Ne Zha*, Chinese CG animated films have traversed a magnificent twenty years. These two decades are a history of idealism-fueled "dogged persistence" by generations of animators, and also a microcosm of the growth of Chinese film industrialization from nothing to something, from weak to strong.

Today, we possess not only the honor of a top-three global box office ranking, but also a complete industrial chain, a group of creators with international vision, and an immensely vast domestic market. We have every reason to be confident about the future. Chinese animated cinema will not only become a "secret weapon" on China's journey to becoming a film powerhouse, but will also serve as an "ambassador" of Chinese culture, telling more wonderful stories – stories of the East, and stories for all humanity – on the world's silver screens.

That faint "Single Beam of Light" from twenty years ago has now transformed into the dazzling "Ten-Thousand-Scale Armor," illuminating the future journey of Chinese animation.



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Guangzhou Game Industry Association



Editor: Cloudy Poon

The Guangzhou Game Industry Association (GGIA) was established in 2018 under the guidance of the Guangzhou Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism. It is a municipal-level non-profit organization with independent legal-entity status, officially registered and approved by the Guangzhou Social Organizations Administration Bureau. The Association was awarded the title of 'Guangzhou 5A Social Organization' in 2022 and 'Guangzhou Brand Social Organization' in 2024.

With the mission of serving enterprises,

promoting industry standards, advancing industrial development, and fostering international engagement, the Association has become one of the most influential industry organizations in Guangzhou. The Association currently has nearly 200 member companies spanning online games, mobile games, browser games, esports, and related sectors across the gaming value chain. Its governing members include leading companies such as NetEase, YYOU, Shiyue, 37 Interactive Entertainment, 4399, BaiTian, Kugou, and Teamtop, along with numerous organizations connected to the gaming industry.

The Association is committed to improving corporate governance within the game

industry, promoting orderly industry development, advancing technical capabilities, safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of game companies, and strengthening industry collaboration. It serves as a bridge between government and industry, promotes industry self-regulation, and supports the healthy, standardized, and sustainable development of Guangzhou's gaming market.

President Wang Juan and Participation in IAICC

President Profile: Wang Juan has extensive frontline experience in Guangzhou's game industry and combines association-management expertise with business leadership

experience. She is familiar with game development, live operations, publishing, AI applications, and international cultural market expansion. Under her leadership, the Association's Secretariat has focused on policy communication, enterprise services, industry self-regulation, resource integration, and international collaboration, helping transform the Association into a comprehensive platform connecting government agencies, industry parks, enterprises, and overseas resources.

Participation in the International Artificial Intelligence and Creativity Conference

On December 13–14, 2025, the International Artificial Intelligence and Creativity Conference (IAICC 2025) was held in Shenzhen. The conference focused on the convergence of artificial intelligence and creative industries, bringing together professionals from animation, gaming, film and television, digital art, open-source software, and technology platforms. As President of the Guangzhou Game Industry Association and an industry representative, Wang Juan attended the conference and participated in panel discussions with domestic and international creative technology leaders on topics including AI-powered game development, content creation pipelines, industrialized production workflows, and global content



Figure: Wang Juan, President of the Guangzhou Game Industry Association, speaking at IAICC 2025.



Figure: Association representatives participated in activities related to the 21st China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair, engaging in discussions on policy resources, industry services, and global cultural market expansion.

distribution. The Association was also listed as a supporting organization, further demonstrating its role as a platform for cross-sector collaboration in the fields of AI, gaming, and digital culture.

From IAICC to the Cultural Industries Fair

The Association connected the AI-driven creative technology discussions at IAICC with the industry showcases, resource matchmaking activities, and international cultural outreach initiatives of the 22nd China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair. In May 2026, the

Association organized Guangzhou-based gaming and digital culture companies to exhibit at the Fair and hosted the 'Greater Bay Area Digital Culture Going Global Forum: Unlimited Connections Through Digital Networks.' The forum focused on the 'New Three Exports' of digital culture—online literature, web dramas, and online games—bringing together leaders from government, industry, academia, and research institutions. Through keynote releases, in-depth knowledge sharing, and ecosystem collaboration, the event empowered the high-quality international expansion of Guangzhou and Guangdong's digital culture industries.



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Can One Person Really Create Work at the Level of a Game Studio?

CGGE'S DIALOGUE WITH ROBERT CHAO, FOUNDER OF POLARIS STUDIO AND PARTNER OF BILIBILI'S HULKFATZERG



Editor: Celia Li, Vincent Yu

In the past, making animation alone felt like carrying an entire production pipeline on your back. You had to learn a stack of software, switch between different workflows, and often spend huge amounts of energy on installation, assets, rendering, and pipeline issues before the real creation even began. For Robert Chao - Founder of Polaris Studio, Partner of Bilibili's HulkFatZerg, Former Industrial Design Lead at Shenzhen KUPA (under the Dawn Venture Capital umbrella) - the

shared value of Blender and AI is that they lower the cost of getting started.

He does not see Blender as a simple replacement for "big studio tools." He sees it as an amplifier for individual creators and small teams. Large studio projects still depend on organizations and production pipelines, of course. But today, independent creators can use lighter tools, richer tutorials, and lower communication costs to produce work that would have been hard to imagine before. In competitions, short films, and personal

projects, many pieces are already approaching cinematic visual quality.

AI is not magic here. Its value is that it lets creators see a direction earlier. Concept images, logos, material styles, and rendering atmospheres used to require long rounds of trial and error. Now, creators can ask AI to generate references first, then decide which direction is worth developing. Even a simple white model can be used to quickly test cartoon, realistic, or e-commerce visual styles. In Robert Chao's own workflow, AI may save



half the time in concept development and visual validation.

But what they really want to share is not only technique. Learning Blender is only the beginning. Young creators also need to know how to build a portfolio, express themselves, and turn skills into employment and commercial value. Surviving in society is also a kind of skill. Many students are not confused simply because they cannot use software. They are confused because they do not know what they are worth, where they should go, or how to turn their work into an opportunity.

When talking about the domestic Blender ecosystem, Robert Chao believes the biggest gaps are high-quality content, connection with real jobs, and stronger community organizers. The software itself will keep maturing. But without people connecting tutorials, industry information, creators, and real projects, individual effort is hard to turn into ecosystem-level strength.



This is why OriginCG is worth mentioning. It is not merely giving creators a moment of exposure. It is trying to connect scattered Blender users, open-source resources, industry information, and real project opportunities. Robert Chao describes OriginCG as a door to free creativity. A community is not a company; it is a collective, and everyone can contribute. In the context of this interview, that idea has real extension. If someone can one day bring different UP creators, students, and independent artists together to complete a film project, OriginCG will no longer be only a place to "watch interviews." It could become the starting point where people find each other

and make work together. That kind of connection has more vitality than simple promotion. In the full interview, he also talks about the free Blender 5.0 public course and how to turn technical growth into long-term professional ability.



Watch the full video interview on <https://origincg.cn/>.



What Makes Blender Powerful Is Not Just That It Is Free

CGGE's Dialogue With 只剩一瓶辣椒酱 Lajiaojiang (Chili Sauce), 3D Artist, Add-Ons Designer, Founder Of ACGgit



Editor: Celia Li, Vincent Yu

If you think Blender is attractive only because it is open-source and free, you are probably seeing only the surface. When Cui Xiao (known as 只剩一瓶辣椒酱 Lajiaojiang or "Chili Sauce" on Bilibili) first moved from Maya and C4D to Blender, the real reason was not price. What drew him in was the feeling of an open ecosystem: the source code is public, extensions can be built, and anyone can take part in shaping the tool.

For creators, that means Blender is no longer just software you passively use. It is a platform that can keep growing and being rebuilt by the community.

In his view, the real challenge for the Chinese Blender ecosystem is not simply to get more people to "learn a piece of software." It is to help more people finish what they actually want to create. Beginners are often pushed away by complicated workflows. Installation, modeling, materials, rendering, plugins:

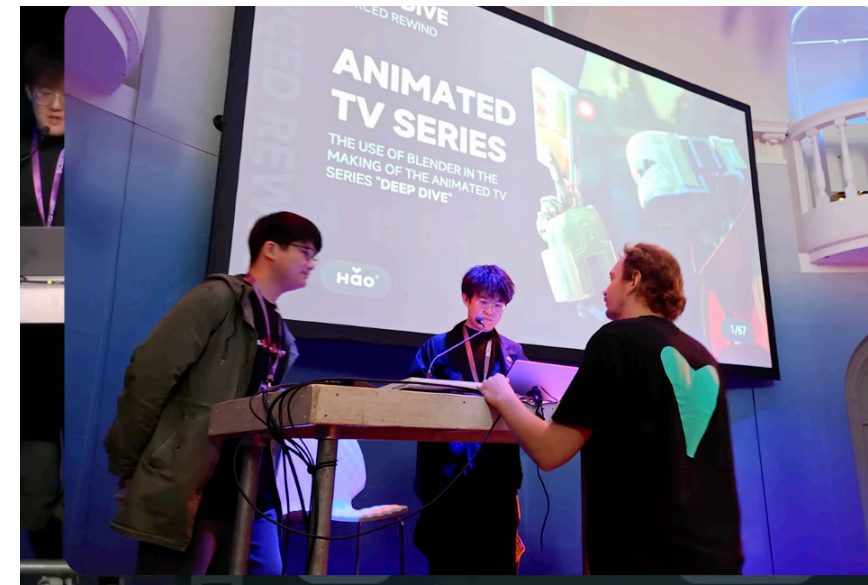
every step can drain creative energy before the real work even begins. That is why his team makes tutorials and tools. The goal is to compress repetitive, complex, time-consuming processes as much as possible, so creators can give their energy back to the work itself. A good tutorial, he believes, should first help users build judgment. Many newcomers are not short of passion. What they lack is a clear sense of what the tool can do, whether it suits them, and whether it is worth their future



investment. Explaining the basics clearly and letting people make decisions in a more transparent information environment matters more than creating anxiety-driven courses. His idea of "casting a wide net" comes from the same logic: first broaden your view and touch different directions, then you will know what is truly worth going deep into.

His view of AI follows the same line. AI should not replace creators; it should help them redistribute time. Research, script analysis, small utility development, and nonessential workflow steps can all be assisted by AI. But how the story is told, how the image works, and how something that has never existed before is finally made still depend on the creator's own decisions.

So the key shift from "knowing how to operate" to "knowing how to create" is not watching more tutorials. It is the day you decide to stop copying tutorials frame by frame. You begin gathering references, studying structure, and solving problems for a goal of your own. That is when



Blender truly becomes an entry point into creation.

This is also the kind of question OriginCG wants to keep discussing. As tools become more open, what deserves attention is not only a plugin or a course, but the people behind them: those willing to share experience, build tools, and lower the threshold for others. In the interview, OriginCG asked what he hoped to share at this year's IAICC conference. Chili Sauce said his team would like to introduce their open-source UI framework. Last year it was still only a demo; this year it may be formally released. In that sense, OriginCG is not just recording the story of one creator. It is putting the new tools,

new ideas, and new entry points emerging inside the Chinese Blender ecosystem into one shared space, where more people can see them. That feels more natural than a simple event promotion, and much closer to what an ecosystem really means.



Watch the full video interview on <https://origincg.cn/>.



When Anime Culture Moves into the City Center: CGGE Observes Firefly's New Ecosystem of Youth Culture



Editor: Vincent Yu, Timothy Tan

As a platform connecting international and Chinese IPs, media organizations, and new media companies, CGGE attended the 38th Guangzhou Firefly Animation & Gaming Carnival as an official media partner. What we witnessed was not merely a convention, but a new model where Chinese youth culture, urban consumption, and global cultural outreach are converging.

From May 1 to May 4, Firefly, themed 'Dream City,' was held in Guangzhou's Pazhou district. Over four days, the event attracted 237,000 visitors, generated more

than 4 billion online impressions, and drove over RMB 145 million in regional consumer spending. More than 265 IPs and brands participated, while the average attendee age was only 21.2 years old, with visitors aged 19–25 accounting for more than 50% of the audience. These figures demonstrate that China's ACG culture has evolved from a niche interest into a youth cultural phenomenon with significant urban influence and commercial impact.

In CGGE's discussions with Firefly Brand Director He Haohua, one keyword appeared repeatedly: 'Fun.' Firefly does not simply define itself as a comic convention; rather, it positions itself as

an Animation & Gaming Carnival. Unlike conventions in Europe and North America, which tend to focus on broader pop culture, or Japanese and Korean events that emphasize fan-created content, China's commercial ACG conventions place greater emphasis on multi-format entertainment, interactive engagement, and immersive experiences.

ACGN (Animation, Comics, Games, and Novels), esports, designer toys, cosplay, virtual idols, trading card games, photography, cross-industry brand collaborations, and IP partnerships collectively shape the event experience, allowing a wide range of niche communities to find their own place.



This spirit of 'fun' is reflected in content integration. At this year's event, the League of Legends: Wild Rift Ionia Cup Grand Finals once again partnered with Firefly. Professional esports tournaments, cosplay showcases, branded gaming-themed vehicles, and player engagement activities were combined, transforming young attendees from passive spectators into active participants and co-creators of the experience.

At the same time, the launch of the 'Move Forward, Beyond Boundaries' 2026 China (Guangzhou) Guochao Animation Character Design Festival further positioned the convention as a platform connecting product launches, creative talent, and industry resources.

More profound changes are taking place beyond the exhibition halls. This year, Firefly partnered with 48 locations across retail districts, restaurants, hotels, tourism attractions, and universities, extending the four-day event into a cross-season consumer experience. This initiative expanded the convention economy into a citywide ACG ecosystem spanning tourism, entertainment, live performances, shopping, fashion, food and beverage, accommodation, and transportation.

From an international perspective, Firefly's significance also lies in its global expansion potential. According to He Haohua, Firefly made its first overseas appearance in Toronto, Canada, during

last year's National Day holiday period, bringing more than 30 Chinese IP brands to North America.

In CGGE's view, the international promotion of Chinese animation culture should not be limited to exporting characters or performers. It should also showcase the complete creative ecosystem built around IP development, including cosplayers, photographers, prop makers, costume designers, post-production artists, and new forms of creative expression capable of revitalizing traditional culture.



As ACG culture moves into the heart of the city, Firefly demonstrates the vitality of China's youth culture while providing global partners with a new gateway to understanding China's IP ecosystem. CGGE looks forward to continuing to leverage its strengths in international connectivity and media communications, helping more overseas audiences discover that today's Chinese content is not only meaningful and valuable, but also engaging enough to inspire direct participation.



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We explore Blender's limitless possibilities through education, training and add-on development

Our Projects



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au-to-troph an organism that is able to create it's own food from sunlight or chemicals (like plants and algae!)

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Independent Animation Studio's Path to Success

An Interview with *In Your Dreams* Director Alex Woo



Editor: Timothy Tan, Adrian Chow

Alex Woo, an animation veteran who worked on Pixar classics such as *Ratatouille*, *WALL-E*, and *Finding Dory*, has successfully launched the hit Netflix children's series *Go Go Cory Carson* and the original animated feature film *In Your Dreams* (2025) as Co-Founder and CEO of the independent studio Kuku Studios. In an exclusive interview during SIGGRAPH Asia 2026, Woo shared his journey from major Hollywood studios to independent production, his views on technological shifts in the animation industry, and his advice for emerging creators.

From Pixar and Lucasfilm to Founding His Own Studio

A graduate of New York University's film school, Alex Woo won a Student Academy

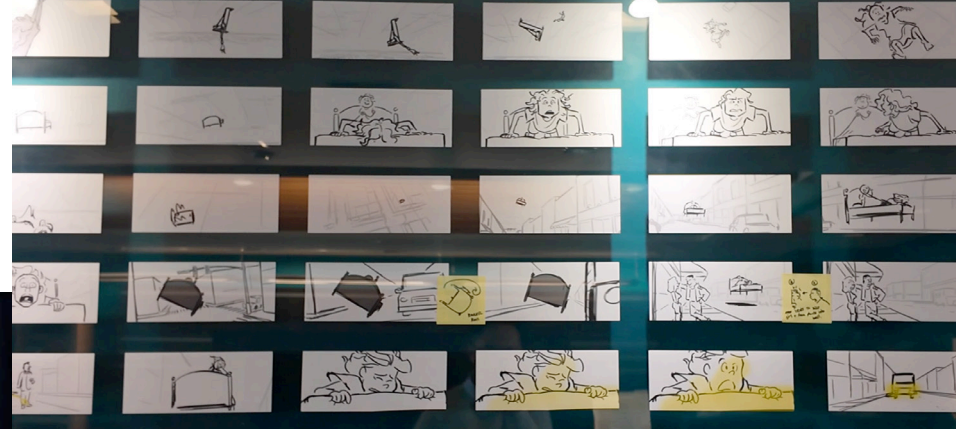
Award for his senior thesis short film, which caught the attention of Lucasfilm Animation. He was hired as a Director-in-Development, then moved to Pixar as a Story Artist, honing his skills in narrative and visual language. In 2016, he co-founded Kuku Studios, based in Berkeley, California, focusing on the front-end development of original animated content.

"Our business model is to do all the front-end work – concept creation, pitching, financing, and getting the green light," Woo explains. "Our studio handles story, editorial, and art – all pre-production. Then we outsource the production pipeline to partners. For *In Your Dreams*, we worked with Sony Pictures Imageworks." This strategy allows a small independent studio to focus on core creativity without competing head-on with large studios in infrastructure and output capacity.

Narrative Challenges of a Dream World: The Making of *In Your Dreams*

In Your Dreams is Kuku Studios's first animated feature, taking nine years from initial idea to release. Woo notes that while dreams are a universal human experience, the lack of rules – "anything can happen" – makes it difficult to establish dramatic stakes. Few Western animation studios had successfully cracked the problem.

His solution came from Scandinavian folklore: the Sandman, who sprinkles magical sand on children's eyes to give them dreams. "We expanded that mythology: if you can find the Sandman in the dream world, he can make your dreams come true." This simple rule connects the dream world to the real world, giving actions consequences and creating narrative drive.



Visually, the team designed the real world in a more grounded, realistic style, allowing the dream world to push design much further – even transforming characters into full anime versions of themselves at certain points. "Animation's advantage is that you can do any style, but you always have to ask what the story needs," Woo emphasizes.

A Cautious View on Artificial Intelligence

Regarding AI generation tools, Woo states that Kuku Studios did not use any AI on its productions, primarily because *In Your Dreams* was greenlit in 2020 and completed in late 2024, before consumer AI tools became widely available. He draws a distinction between machine learning and generative AI: "Visual effects companies have been using machine learning for decades – for crowd simulations, hair effects, textures. That empowers artists. No one objects to that. What makes people uncomfortable is the agentic side of generative AI – it feels like craftsmanship and human connection are being removed. Also, scraping data without compensating rights holders raises ethical concerns." While he does not personally like the aesthetics of current consumer AI tools, he does not rule out future use. "My primary focus is always story, the look of the film, and how to execute that at the highest level of artistry for the audience."

Advice for Young Creators: Follow Your Passion, Not the Tools

When asked how students should balance learning new technologies versus traditional arts, Woo shares his own experience. In the early 2000s, as CG animation rose and 2D hand-drawn jobs declined, professors advised learning

computer animation. He tried it, but found the process unintuitive and unenjoyable. Instead of forcing himself, he shifted to storyboarding – a role that allowed him to keep drawing while leveraging his narrative skills.

"If you don't enjoy using a certain technology but force yourself to do it just to get a job, I don't think it will serve you in the long run. You have to be genuinely interested in something to excel at it. Find the position that brings you joy every day, rather than chasing trends."

Future Plans: Multiple Projects in Development

Alex reveals that Kuku Studios is currently developing several projects simultaneously: another original animated feature to be pitched after awards season; a live-action TV series aiming for a spring or summer pitch; and a children's show far along in development at Netflix, hoping for a green light next year.

"Hollywood requires you to have a lot of material. You never know which one will catch fire. *In Your Dreams* was first

pitched in 2017 – nobody was interested. We sat on it for three or four years. If we had waited only on that project, our company would have gone bankrupt." He emphasizes that independent creators and small studios must keep multiple projects at different stages to maintain resilience and seize opportunities when they arise.

About Kuku Studios

Founded in 2016 and based in Berkeley, California, Kuku Studios specializes in frontend development and licensing of original animated content. Its series *Go Go Cory Carson* won three Emmy Awards, and the feature film *In Your Dreams* is now streaming globally on Netflix.

About Alex Woo

Chinese-American animator, graduate of NYU film school, Student Academy Award winner. Former Director-in-Development at Lucasfilm Animation and Story Artist at Pixar. Currently Co-Founder and CEO of Kuku Studios.



Watch the full interview with subtitles on OriginCG:
<https://www.origincg.cn/en/news/independent-animation-studios-path-to-success-an-interview-with-kuku-studio-founder-alex-woo/>



Creating in Uncertainty: The Blender Ecosystem as seen through BCON NA in Austin



Editor: Catina Yiu

BCON Austin 2026 took place on April 13–14, 2026, at Inn Cahoots in downtown Austin, Texas, which is the only officially recognized Blender conference in North America this year. Organized by the Autotroph team, the creators of CG Cookie, Superhive (formerly Blender Market), and Orange Turbine, the event reflected their longstanding commitment to Blender education, artist development, and community support. Drawing over 200 attendees, the program spanned keynote presentations, workshops, breakout sessions, and community networking. Beyond showcasing Blender's capabilities as a CG tool, the conference served as a platform for exploring how creators can continue to create, learn, and collaborate amid rapid technological change and uncertainty.

Speakers from diverse backgrounds shared their perspectives on working with Blender. Andrew Price, widely known for his iconic donut tutorial series, discussed how artists can reframe AI not as a threat to human judgment but as a means of streamlining workflows and supporting creative decision-making. Maurits Valk's session on 3D storyboarding demonstrated how Blender is reshaping pre-production thinking in filmmaking. Jacob Holiday presented a clear modular framework for VFX workflows, spotlighting underutilized Blender features. Meanwhile, talks on forensic visualization, architectural construction processes, and aerospace prototyping illustrated Blender's growing presence in non-traditional professional contexts, functioning not merely as a rendering tool, but as a medium for legal communication, architectural planning, and engineering concept validation. Collectively, these sessions underscored

Blender's emergence as a shared spatial language across disciplines, with its core value increasingly rooted in openness, versatility, and accessibility.

CGGE attended as both sponsor and speaker, representing the Chinese Blender community and bringing a distinctive international perspective to the conference. Timothy Tan and Catina Yiu shared how China's Blender ecosystem has grown through community initiatives, educational outreach, and sustained infrastructure development. Their presentation covered CGGE's work in advancing the OriginCG.cn platform, localizing Blender learning resources, supporting multilingual access, and connecting Chinese users with the global open-source ecosystem. The talk also reflected on the outcomes of BCON Shenzhen 2025, highlighting its role as a key bridge between China's domestic



Blender community and the broader international landscape.

Other Themed Talks

A sustainable Blender ecosystem cannot rest on software development alone. It requires a broader, multilayered support structure. At its foundation, Blender's core openness as a free and open-source software must be preserved, as it underpins the entire ecosystem. Built upon this, education, certification, community organizations, regional coordinators, open knowledge sharing, and clear onboarding

and retention pathways collectively form the human and community capital essential for sustained growth. On the commercial side, long-term sustainability depends on the development of asset marketplaces, tooling services, and enterprise integrations, which enable Blender's adoption across professional pipelines. Corporate sponsorships and regional ecosystem initiatives provide funding, organizational capacity, and promotional reach at scale, though they may also introduce tensions around value alignment, governance models, and

resource allocation. Viewed holistically, a sustainable Blender ecosystem demands an open core, a multi-tiered economic foundation, diverse application contexts, and a shared responsibility structure distributed across the community.

For artists, educators, enterprises, event organizers, and community platforms alike, the imperative extends well beyond simply using Blender. It lies in sustained investment in knowledge translation, instructional design, development support, and community programming, collectively maintaining and continuously reinforcing the infrastructure that keeps this ecosystem thriving.



Annecy International Animation Film Festival 2026: A Global Animation Extravaganza Opens with Blockbuster Content and Industry Accolades



Editor: Catina Yiu

The world's premier event for animation, the Annecy International Animation Film Festival, will take place from June 21 to 27, 2026, with its accompanying MIFA market running from June 23 to 26 at Annecy. This year, the festival has

received major recognition, officially earning FIAPF (International Federation of Film Producers Associations) accreditation as a Category A festival. It now joins a network of 49 top-tier festivals across 29 countries on five continents, placing Annecy alongside Cannes, Berlin, Venice, and other elite film festivals under the same standard framework. This means

winning entries in its competition sections gain significantly stronger endorsement for global distribution and awards contention. For industry professionals, this is not only a boost in prestige but also a direct gateway to the world's most authoritative evaluation system for animation content.

This year's festival has already announced its first wave of major special events and a complete lineup, bringing together legendary final works, world premieres, classic IP revitalizations, and diverse competition sections. It offers a unique blend of artistic height, commercial value, and creative energy — an unmissable industry peak experience for animators, creators, and fans worldwide.

I. First Special Events for 2026: Cross-Border, Immersive, Carnival

The 2026 festival will launch a series of newly curated special events that break traditional screening boundaries and create immersive animation experiences:

Opening Night · Lakeside Light Spectacular: An openair gala on the shores of Lake Annecy, combining largescale projection mapping, live orchestra, and drone performances. The entire town becomes a stage, showcasing the stunning interplay between animation and realworld scenery.

"Future Narratives" Summit: A high-level forum for senior industry professionals focusing on cutting-edge technologies such as AI-assisted creation, real-time engine animation, and virtual production. Top executives from studios like Pixar, Studio Ghibli, and Netflix Animation will engage in dialogue with independent pioneers.

Annecy Animation Carnival: Street parties



open to both the public and professionals, including character parades, impromptu animation workshops, openair classic screenings, and a "Midnight Madness" section – a collection of the world's most bizarre and stylized animated shorts, accompanied by live DJ sets at an openair cinema.

Mifa Exclusive Closed-Door Pitch: Within Mifa, the world's largest animation market, a new "Pitch Sprint" session has been added. Selected projects gain direct access to decision-makers from Netflix, Crunchyroll, France Télévisions, and other platforms, offering a fast track for coproduction and distribution.

II. Top Special Events First Look – Four World Premieres Set to Ignite Anticipation

World Premiere of Richard Williams' Final Work *Lysistrata* – Three-time Oscar

winner and animation legend Richard Williams' swan song, *Lysistrata*, makes a major appearance. A sequel to his earlier work *Prologue*, it adapts Aristophanes' classic Greek comedy about women ending war through radical action. As the master's final creation, it stands as the festival's most artistically significant tribute.

World Premiere of *Daffy Season* – World Cup-Themed Short – Riding the 2026 global football fever, Warner Bros. Animation's new theatrical short *Daffy Season* will have its world premiere. *Daffy Duck* and *Elmer Fudd* engage in soccer mayhem, continuing the classic fastpaced comedy and slapstick of Looney Tunes, and kicking off early celebrations for *Daffy Duck's* 90th anniversary in 2027 – blending nostalgia with contemporary buzz.

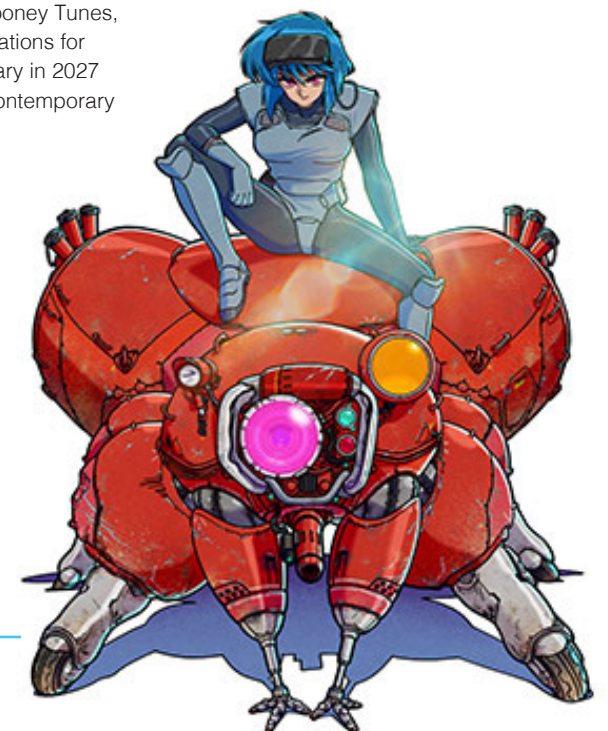
Advance Screening of the New *Ghost in the Shell* Animated Series – The cyberpunk classic IP *Ghost in the Shell* returns with a brand-new animated series. The festival will exclusively screen the first two episodes, with the creative team revealing behind-the-scenes stories. Decades later, this reinterpretation of the iconic sci-fi work resonates with contemporary value, igniting attention from global fans and industry.

Theatrical Premiere of *Batman: Knightfall (Part One)* – Warner Bros. Animation and DC Studios join forces for the epic animated feature *Batman: Knightfall (Part One)*, a global premiere that faithfully adapts Batman's legendary storyline. As the opening chapter of a multipart saga, it delivers a stunning audiovisual experience on the big screen. Backed by a mega-IP and top-tier production, it serves as a showcase window for commercial animation excellence.

III. Comprehensive Competition Sections – Unearthing New Global Animation Talent

This year's festival lineup covers all categories: feature films, shorts, graduation films, TV animation, and commissioned animation. Six competition sections balance artistic innovation with

攻殻機動隊
THE GHOST IN THE SHELL



popular appeal, bringing together high-quality works from 43 countries to feed the industry with fresh creativity and talent:

Official Short Films Section – The Official selection places its spotlight on the latest gems from established filmmakers but also from emerging talents, providing an exclusive glimpse into the realm of animation, its techniques and its messages.

Short Films for Young Audiences –In a selection of predominantly animal-themed storylines, between microcosm and macrocosm, endearing characters embark on extraordinary journeys from the sea to outer space. The viewer follows the explorations and wanderings of these tiny beings with big ambitions, as they search for their place in this vast world.

Off-Limits Short Films – The Off-Limits programme pushes the boundaries of visual and technical experimentation. Using movement, texture and rhythm, the works take the audience on a multi-sensory journey to the outer limits of the medium.

Perspectives Short Films – Through its multiple points of view and diverse techniques, the Perspectives section invites us to question our own worldview. The films encapsulate the inherent contradictions of contemporary societies and the constant interplay between intimate and universal themes.

Midnight Short Films – A selection of thrillers and horror films designed to shock and draw you into a dark deranged world.

WTF Section – A must-see selection of elusive films where comedy delightfully interweaves with other genres and effectively blurs their lines.

In addition, the Graduation Films section spotlights young creators, while the TV and Commissioned Animation sections cover series, music videos, commercials, and other commercial scenarios, fully demonstrating the creative breadth and applied value of the animation industry.

**IV. Maximum Industry Value –
A Must-Attend Global Networking
Feast for Animators**

As a FIAPF accredited Category A festival, Annecy 2026 is more than a screening platform – it has become a core hub for the global animation industry. On one hand, it offers professionals toptier channels for work exposure, copyright deals, and talent matching, enabling them to accurately grasp global animation trends and market directions. On the other hand, it brings together legendary masters' final works, major IP new releases, and experimental avantgarde pieces side by side, blending artistic depth with commercial vitality. Visitors can experience the ultimate charm of animated art while uncovering opportunities for industrial collaboration.

From classic IP rejuvenation to cuttingedge experimental creation, from authoritative industry recognition to the convergence of global resources, the Annecy International Animation Film Festival 2026 delivers toptier content, official endorsement, and a diverse ecosystem to create an annual carnival for animators worldwide. Whether you are a seasoned professional, an emerging creator, or an animation enthusiast, you can immerse yourself in the infinite possibilities of animation and join this unmissable global celebration of animation excellence!



Viborg's Unique Business Ecosystem creates World-leading Game and Animation Studios, Harnessing Denmark's Collaborative and Creative DNA



Editor: Sophia Zhu

Viborg is UNESCO's only Nordic Creative City in the Media Arts category, a place where a unique ecosystem has been built and nurtured to create one of Europe's most dynamic animation and gaming hubs. Anchored by The Animation Workshop, one of Europe's top schools for animators and game creators, and supported by Creative Viborg, which builds bridges across animation, games, XR and visual storytelling, the Danish city celebrates its creativity at the Viborg Animation Festival, a week-long conference with international speakers

and a desire to drive new thinking in gaming and animation.

"Creative Viborg is unique because we work across disciplines – animation, games, XR and visual storytelling – to build a shared ecosystem. It's this collaborative spirit that makes Viborg stand out internationally and allows us to nurture world-class talent right here." Marie Munch Burski, Director, Creative Viborg

Drawing on Denmark's cultural DNA
Danish games and animation studios often explore what it means to be human. Underpinned by Denmark's cultural DNA, in a country where values of equality,

storytelling, craft and collaboration are prized, their stories invite reflection and emotional connection, while remaining open to experimentation across formats and styles. The result is work that speaks to audiences in fresh and meaningful ways.

Thanks to the success of gaming studios such as SYBO Games, IOI, Tactile, Triband, and Ghost Ship Games, and animation studios including award-winning Sun Creature, Nørhum, Tumblehead and Ouros Studios, Denmark has become a respected hub for high-quality, emotionally resonant work. Together, the industries blend artistic ambition with technological innovation, often driven by



public service values and cross-sector partnerships including education, health and sustainability. Leaning into Denmark's collaborative DNA, Creative Viborg has worked hard to make an ecosystem in the city that bridges the industries and supports its development via a shared infrastructure, values system and talent pool.

At the annual Viborg Animation Festival (VAF), new ideas in media, storytelling and design are explored and international speakers, including Tomm Moore and Thibaut Delahaye, share their experiences and knowledge. Discussion forums highlight funding, inspiration and co-production opportunities, and a dedicated track for games and interactive media shines a spotlight on the rise of locally created games. The festival aims to drive the future of the industry and draws over 25,000 people for free film screenings and family workshops as well.

"At Viborg Animation Festival, we bring together the best from Denmark and the world – from award-winning filmmakers to emerging game developers. It is in this encounter between local talent and international voices that new ideas and collaborations are born."

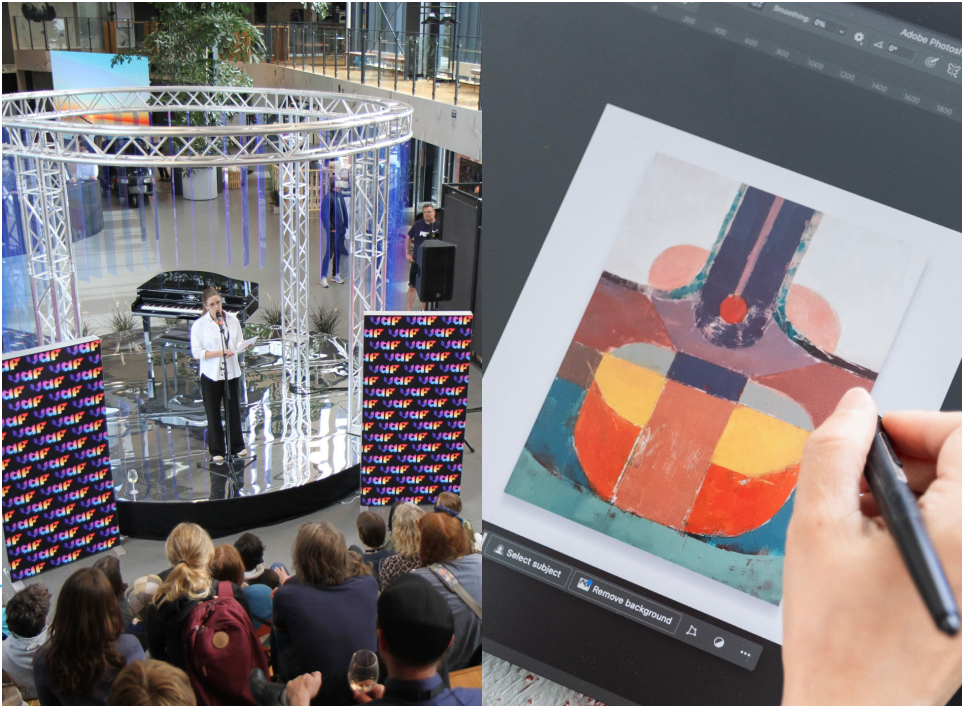
Karoline Nederby, Director, Viborg Animation Festival

Global ambitions in animation and game design

Creative Viborg has been a driving force in turning the city into a creative powerhouse. As the city's umbrella organisation, its goal is to establish Viborg as a leading creative hub in Denmark and internationally. To achieve that aim,

it works as a bridge across animation, games, XR, and visual storytelling at home and abroad – and both within entertainment as well as applied art in sectors like healthcare and education. Among its many international projects, it is engaged in several EU projects to strengthen the European Creative Industries, positioning Viborg as a globally relevant creative city with a strong entrepreneurial spirit in the process.

The organisation partners with The Animation Workshop, a world-renowned school educating the next generation of animators, storyteller and world builders, as well as Arsenalet, an entrepreneurial co-working space for start-ups, freelancers and game and animation businesses, creating a pipeline from education to industry. Its gaming and animation studios continue to gain international attention.



With new national production incentives, Denmark is becoming a more attractive base for international animation and game productions. Viborg stands ready with talent, infrastructure, and a proven creative environment to drive the industries into a bold new future.

About Creative Viborg

Creative Viborg is at the forefront of digital creativity and storytelling in Denmark. Based in Viborg, a UNESCO Creative City, Creative Viborg acts as a single point of entry to the wide range of competencies within the creative industry in Viborg's ecosystem. The ecosystem fosters innovation across animation, gaming, XR, photography, drawing, visual design, and creative business development.

By fostering collaboration and innovation, Creative Viborg connects local and international partners to shape the future of digital creativity.

Among many of its creative strengths, Creative Viborg's ecosystem is acclaimed to have the 2nd best Animation School in Europe; The Animation Workshop, as well as an outstanding freelance and start-up environment in the coworking space Arsenalet.



Denmark's Animation Ecosystem: Where Storytelling meets Collaboration



Author: Creative Denmark
Editor: Sophia Zhu

Denmark's animation industry is not defined by size alone. Its strength lies in how closely connected the field is. Education, talent development, studio production and international collaboration sit unusually near one another, creating an environment where ideas move quickly from training to production and from local networks to global audiences. That proximity shapes both the culture and the output of the industry.

It supports a way of working that is

agile, story-led and open to partnership. Nowhere is that more visible than in Viborg, which has grown into one of the Nordic region's most important hubs for animation and visual storytelling. Viborg is UNESCO's only Nordic Creative City in Media Arts, and its ecosystem is anchored by The Animation Workshop, supported by Creative Viborg and activated each year through Viborg Animation Festival.

A culture shaped by story

Danish animation combines diverse visual styles with a consistent focus on story. Across studios and formats, storytelling remains the guiding discipline, and it shapes decisions from early concept to

final frame. That shared approach often brings emotional clarity and a high level of craft, with characters that stay with audiences long after the credits roll.

Danish productions often feel deliberate rather than overstated. They trust the audience and allow space for nuance while still reaching broadly. That quality has helped Danish animation gain international respect, whether in auteur-driven film, service production, original IP or children's storytelling.

Viborg as a Nordic powerhouse

Viborg offers perhaps the clearest example of how this ecosystem functions



in practice. The city has spent decades building an environment where education, business development and public engagement reinforce one another.

The Animation Workshop has become a central institution in that model and is internationally recognised for training talent that moves into studios across Europe and beyond. Around that anchor, Creative Viborg helps connect animation, games, XR and visual storytelling, strengthening the conditions for new companies, co-productions and talent retention.

This is not an ecosystem built on isolation. It is built on exchange.

A festival that connects talent and industry

That spirit also defines Viborg Animation Festival. The festival has become the largest animation event in the Nordics and brings together artists, students, studios, decision-makers and audiences in one shared setting.

Its 2026 edition takes place from 7 to 13 September, with Industry Days on 10 and 11 September. Talks, screenings and networking sessions reflect the Danish approach to the field: professional exchange matters, but so does public access and community engagement.

The result is a festival that serves both as an international meeting point and as a civic celebration of animation.

Studios shaping Denmark's reputation

A number of studios illustrate the range and maturity of Danish animation. Sun Creature is among the best known internationally. The studio helped bring Flee to the screen, showing how animation

can handle urgent human stories with emotional precision.

Nørlum represents another core strength: high-end co-production rooted in craftsmanship. Since 2010, the studio has built a strong reputation in 2D animation and contributed to productions such as Song of the Sea and Long Way North. Tumblehead reflects a more playful side of Danish animation. The studio is known for character-led storytelling and visually engaging work that appeals across generations.

Newer companies such as Ouros

Animation and Skjaldborn point to where the sector is heading, with stronger world-building, cross-format storytelling and long-term audience communities.

Built for international partnership

This is also why Denmark is an attractive partner for international collaboration. Danish studios are used to co-production structures, adapting to different pipelines and aligning early on creative as well as practical frameworks.

In a global industry where complexity can slow momentum, that matters. Denmark offers highly skilled talent, strong



professional standards and a production culture shaped by dialogue rather than hierarchy.

For international partners, this often translates into reliability, creative openness and an ability to move from ambition to delivery.

A connected future

The ecosystem matters just as much as the individual studios. Graduates from The Animation Workshop often move into studios within the same wider environment or stay connected through freelance and international project work.

Shared spaces, recurring festivals

and talent programmes help maintain continuity. That continuity is one reason Danish animation can punch above its weight internationally. It reduces the distance between emerging talent and established production.

For Annecy's international audience, Denmark is worth watching not simply because it produces strong films or talented artists, but because it has built a system that helps creative work endure. In Viborg and beyond, the country offers a model in which education, production and exchange are closely aligned.



Korean Independent Animation Association (KIAFA): Introduction to the Association and Its Vision



Author: KIAFA AniSEED

Editor: Sophia Zhu

“What is Independent Animation?”

Independent animation has traditionally been defined as a medium through which creators express their pure artistic vision, free from commercial constraints. Today, however, this concept continues to expand. Contemporary independent animation actively engages with audiences, forging broader connections and resonance through new modes of distribution and points of contact.

Independent animation serves as a vital driving force that continually pushes the boundaries of the medium. Creators explore new narratives and forms of expression based on their unique perspectives and sensibilities, thereby expanding the horizons of animation as an art form.

Founded in 2005, the Korean Independent

Animation Association (KIAFA) is a community where such creators come together to support one another and collectively shape the value of independent animation. As a platform that connects creators, works, and audiences, the association seeks to build a sustainable foundation for the continued growth and expansion of independent animation.

KIAFA's mission is to invigorate the creative environment for independent animation and to foster an ecosystem where creativity and diversity are respected. To this end, the association focuses on the following key directions:

- Expanding freedom of expression and cultural diversity
- Establishing a sustainable, creator-centered production environment
- Promoting the social and industrial value of independent animation
- Building an open framework for collaboration through both domestic and international exchange

Current Activities and Future Plans

KIAFA continues to carry out a wide range of practical initiatives that connect the production, distribution, and audience engagement of independent animation. At present, the association is expanding the circulation of Korean independent animation through both domestic and international distribution efforts. By collaborating with international film festivals and diverse platforms, KIAFA creates ongoing opportunities for these works to reach new audiences. Among these efforts, the distribution team AniSEED specializes in the distribution of Korean independent animation, aiming to broaden its reach and promote cultural diversity. In addition to the management and preservation of works, AniSEED actively facilitates various screening opportunities, including film festivals, television broadcasts, and streaming services.

KIAFA also organizes the Seoul Indie-



AniFest, which has been held annually since 2005. The festival has consistently highlighted the experimental spirit and potential of Korean independent animators while striving to expand the boundaries of animation. As the world's only animation film festival dedicated to Asian animation, it goes beyond showcasing works to foster discourse and exchange around contemporary animation.

In addition, KIAFA operates domestic and international touring programs such as the AniSalon Exhibition, which brings festival selections to theaters across Korea, and Korean Special Programs, organized in collaboration with overseas film festivals. These initiatives expand opportunities for creators and their works to engage directly with audiences.

KIAFA also continues to strengthen its network to promote collaboration and knowledge exchange among creators. Through workshops and seminars, KIAFA supports the improvement of the creative

environment and the development of professional capabilities.

Looking ahead, KIAFA plans to further expand its international partnerships, actively seeking opportunities for co-productions and collaborative projects. At the same time, the association aims to enhance accessibility and scalability by strengthening its connections with emerging distribution platforms. Furthermore, through the Creative Talent Development Program supported by the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), KIAFA is dedicated to discovering and nurturing the next generation of creators. Alongside this, the Seoul Indie-Ani Academy (SIACA), an in-house initiative, offers educational programs in planning, production, and criticism, contributing to the establishment of a sustainable creative ecosystem. Through these efforts, KIAFA seeks to ensure that the creativity and diversity of Korean independent animation can connect with an even broader global audience.

Notable Korean Creators and Studios

Director HAN Jiwon
HAN Ji-won began her career in animation after winning the Grand Prize at the Seoul Indie-AniFest with *Kopi Luwak* (2010), a film she created while studying at the Korea National University of Arts. Since her debut, she has worked across a wide range of fields, including independent and commercial animation as well as brand collaborations. Her notable works include *The Summer* (2021), based on the original novel by Choi Eun-young, and the Netflix original feature *Lost in Starlight* (2025). With her distinctive lyricism and delicate emotional direction, she has established herself as a highly regarded animation director whose works resonate deeply with audiences.

VCRWORKS (<https://vcrworks.kr/>)

VCRWORKS is a Seoul-based animation studio dedicated to creating stories and distinctive visual styles that deliver joy and inspiration to a wide audience. The studio aims to produce works that carry timeless

values while maintaining a unique artistic identity. Its notable works include *Starry Night* (2017), *Architect A* (2022), and *My Mother's Story* (2024).

Studio SHELTER (<https://studioshelter.mycafe24.com/>)

Studio SHELTER is a creative group that integrates original content development with commercial, cultural, artistic, and design practices. Through innovative ideas and approaches, the studio seeks to blend artistic and commercial domains while exploring new genres. Currently, it continues to gain attention through both short films and a variety of commercial projects in collaboration with diverse partners.

Recommended Independent Animation Works

Battery Grandma (dir. Jeon Seung-bae)
Directed by JEON Seung-bae of Toyville Studio, Battery Grandma is part of a series that began with Battery Daddy and continued with Battery Mommy. The series has established itself as a heartfelt body of work that conveys the value of family with warmth and charm.

Boundaries (dir. Lee Seun)
LEE Seun's Boundaries has received significant attention at major European film festivals. The film explores how boundaries between individuals and communities often reveal differences in identity. Focusing on these boundaries, it examines patterns of expansion and contraction shaped by survival mechanisms, using space as a central motif.

Perspectives on International Collaboration and Partnership Opportunities

KIAFA believes that the creativity and diversity inherent in independent animation can extend beyond national borders. In particular, international collaboration serves as a key driver of growth, as new narratives and forms emerge at the intersection of different cultural backgrounds and production environments.

Building on this perspective, KIAFA continuously seeks partnerships with a

wide range of international organizations, film festivals, distributors, as well as educational and research institutions. Through various forms of collaboration, such as joint screening programs, curatorial partnerships, international co-productions, and creator exchange initiatives, the association aims to share resources and experiences while fostering an expanded creative environment.

Korean independent animation has consistently gained recognition at international festivals and platforms for its originality and high level of craftsmanship. Within this context, KIAFA plays a key role as a bridge, introducing Korean works and creators to global audiences.

At the same time, KIAFA remains open to presenting international partners' works and creators in Korea. Through mutual exchange, the association seeks to help independent animation from

different regions reach broader audiences while building long-term collaborative relationships.

Looking ahead, KIAFA will continue to explore opportunities to actively present Korean independent animation on the international stage while keeping the door open to diverse forms of collaboration. Through new partnerships and projects, the association aims to expand creative environments and realize the full potential of independent animation together.



Greek Animation Goes Global: How a Small Animation Scene Is Making Big Moves on the World Stage



Author: Aristarchos Papadaniel
Editor: Sophia Zhu

Greece's "presidential news" from ASIFA Hellas furthermore exciting updates from ANIMASYROS, Thessaloniki Animation Festival, World Industrial Design Association and ASIFA International.

ASIFA HELLAS ELECTION RESULTS AND VISION

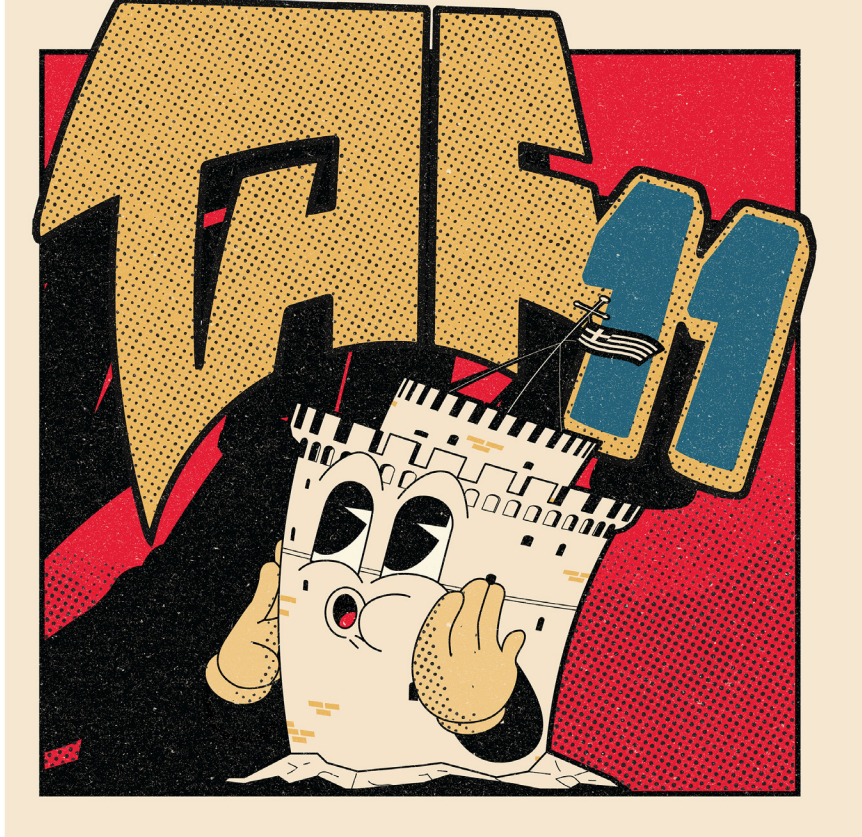
The brand-new ASIFA Hellas Executive Board for 2026–2029 term is led by Kleopatra Korai (President), Irida Zhonga (Vice President), Anna Oikonomou (Treasurer), Dimitris Armenakis (Secretary), Sergio Kotsovoulos (Communication) with General Assembly

Members: Fokion Xenos, Yianni Lolis, Isavella Alopoudi, Dimitris Savvaids, Aristarchos Papadaniel, Nikos Bourloukas and Dimitris Bellos. As one of ASIFA Hellas founding members and the only one continuously elected at the General Assembly -from 2008 until now- I wish the new ASIFA Hellas team all the best!

Newly elected ASIFA Hellas President Mrs. Kleopatra Korai states the following: "As Greek animation enters a period of genuine growth, the need for collective action has never been more pressing. ASIFA stands as the community's most vital pillar, and my ambition is to strengthen it as a shared space for connection, knowledge exchange, and coordinated effort. A first concrete step is

systematic mapping -understanding who we are, how many we are, and where we work. An accessible database would chart the full spectrum of Greek animation: from production companies to independent animators and emerging creators across every link in the creative chain." and continues by underlying that: "Equally important is building on the foundations laid by previous ASIFA Hellas boards, who through persistence and hard work forged ties between the community and public institutions, secured funding, and brought Greek animation onto the international stage -most visibly through a sustained presence at Annecy International Animation Film Festival."

ASIFA Hellas will once again participate



in the Annecy International Animation Film Festival during MIFA 2026 representing Greek animation creators and creative industries with a booth powered by EKKOMED - Hellenic Film & Audiovisual Center (Greece's national film and audiovisual funding body).

GREEK ANIMATION FESTIVAL'S INITIATIVES

ANIMASYROS President Mr. Vassilis C. Karamitsanis representing Greece's annual leading international animation festival held every September on Syros Island, Cyclades announces that: "We are very proud for a third consecutive year to collaborate with Annecy Animation Festival to organize the ANIMASYROS Mediterranean pitching session in the framework of the 2026 MIFA animation market. This initiative is the result of the long-standing Greek-French strategic collaboration in the field of animation, which is endorsed by the French Institutes of Paris & Athens. We welcome creators from around the Med who have the chance to pitch their short film projects in progress to the international audiences of both Annecy and Syros."

Additionally, as the Secretary General of CIFEJ - International Center of Films for Children and Young People, relocated in 2025 in Athens with the endorsement of EKKOMED - Hellenic Film & Audiovisual Center, Mr. Karamitsanis points out that "we attempt to bridge global animation with the entire youth media industry, aiming at quality production, value-based content and cultural diversity in the field of cinema and media for kids and young people."

Awarded animation studio Funny Tales Co-founder Mr. Dimitris Savvaidis informs us that "Funny Tales is once more a leader in the animation industry of Greece finalising two major deals. A co-production with Ireland and Portugal "Occupation Witch" a six-episode teen fantasy European anime production that Funny Tales is responsible for art and animation. The second and important for the whole Greek industry is the strategic partnership Funny Tales signed with Cartoon regarding CARTOON FORUM 2027 that Greece will be the country spotlight for that year and Funny Tales with the collaboration of Thessaloniki

Animation Festival (TAF) will coordinate the Greek presence and boost of the industry." Being also the President of TAF Mr. Savvaidis continues by asserting: "TAF is growing. Now two times awarded "Excellence Award" and "Hospitality Award" Thessaloniki Animation Festival is building strategic partnerships and being elevated into a qualifying event ensuring that the animation films coming to TAF will get represented, promoted and celebrated in the best way possible towards their awards journey. As has been told, one of the successes is the collaboration with Funny Tales and the coordination of the Country Spotlight of CARTOON FORUM 2027. Guests and the community of TAF are growing into an international community that never stops creating."

CURRENT INTERNATIONALLY DISTINGUISHED GREEK ANIMATED PRODUCTIONS

"The Synthetic Age", a dystopian animated short written and directed by Dimitris Armenakis, produced by Frenel, premiered at Annecy International Animation Film Festival 2025 in the Midnight Specials category, won the Best Greek Film Award at the Thessaloniki Animation Festival TAF and was official selection in various international animation festivals such as the BAFTA/BIFA-qualifying Norwich Film Festival, SITGES, Animateka, PÖFF Shorts (Black Nights), and many more. The award-winning 5-minute silent film "Holy Shit" written and directed by Taxiarchis Deligiannis and Vasilis Tsiouvaras produced by Dahouse Studio, depicts a chaotic, over-touristed Athens. It was also selected for the 45th edition of the Oscar-qualifying Brussels International Film Festival ANIMA.

Vibrant and comedic stop motion animated series "Natural Selection" (in development) written and directed by Irida Zhonga, produced by Isavella Alopoudi (Neda Film), was selected and presented at the CEE Animation Workshop 2025. The series delves into the amusing and often absurd ways animals meet their ends, ultimately finding their final resting place in a whimsical Natural History Museum. The development of the script was supported



by the Hellenic Film & Audiovisual Center - Creative Greece | The Future Is Here: Audiovisual Projects. Funded by the European Union – NextGenerationEU.

The 3D animation project "Nine Lives Left" traveled to Bordeaux, France, to participate in the Cartoon Movie CARTOON pitching & co-production forum, in the "in development" category. This is a particularly significant distinction, as it is the first time in 25 years that a Greek project has been selected in this category. The team, consisting of creator Zacharias Mavroeidis, producer Maria Kontogianni (Wild At Heart), animation director Panos Xenakis and art director Simos Magliveras from the animation studio Mascista, actively participated in the three-day forum, presenting a one-minute 3D pilot that was screened for the first time to prospective investors and co-producers from the international animation industry.

"Angel Pardalos" -multiart cinema created and produced by Angeliki Pardalidou made its world premiere in China at the 16th Beijing International Film Festival on April 2026 participating in the Forward Future program dedicated to new directors and innovative projects. The main character's memories transform into digital art, animation, poetry, and sound. Reality and imagination intertwine to create a multi-art spectacle - playful, emotional, and deeply human. Blending theater, cinema, VFX, AI, digital art, documentary, animation, social media aesthetics, poetry, and original music, "Angel Pardalos" is a kaleidoscopic self-portrait of resilience and creativity.

CYPRUS AND GREECE REPRESENTED IN THE FOUNDING COUNCIL OF WIDA

Cyprus and Greece were represented in the Founding Council of the World Industrial Design Association (WIDA) that took place in Shanghai, China, on April 2026, marking the official launch of a new global organisation dedicated to advancing industrial design through international collaboration, research, and innovation. The conference was hosted at the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology and at the Fuxing Cloud Hall in Shanghai, and included the First General Assembly and the First Council Meeting of WIDA, establishing the organisation's governance structure at its founding stage. Cyprus and Greece were

represented by Mrs. Angeliki Athanasiadi and Mr. Miltiades Karras, co-founding members of WIDA and co-founders of Graphic Stories Cyprus, an international cultural and educational organisation in visual communication, with extensive activity in conferences, exhibitions, and international collaborations. Mrs. Angeliki Athanasiadi, an award-winning visual communication designer, academic, and Founder & Creative Director of Graphic Stories Cyprus, participated as a keynote speaker at the International Academic Salon of Industrial Design, presenting:

"Designing the Future: Human-Centered Innovation, Education and Responsibility in the Age of AI", highlighting the role of





human-centered design, education, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence. She was also elected as a First Council Member of WIDA, taking part in the organisation's founding governing body and contributing to shaping its international direction. "Our participation in WIDA is not only about design, but about positioning Cyprus and Greece within the global creative dialogue and contributing to the future of design," said Mrs. Athanasiadi. This development strengthens the international presence of Cyprus and Greece, opens new opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange, and contributes to promoting the

creativity, cultural identity, and values of both countries within a global network. In a time of rapid transformation, WIDA promotes collaboration across borders and disciplines, with the shared goal of a more sustainable, human-centered, and meaningful future. The topic is of particular interest to the fields of education, creative industries, technology, and cultural development.

MESSAGE FROM THE NEW ASIFA INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT FROM GREECE

Greek animation director, producer, and Course Leader of the Animation

& Interactive Media & Game Design programme at AKTO Art & Design, Mrs. Anastasia Dimitra has been elected as the President of the ASIFA International (Association Internationale du Film d'Animation) Executive Board for the 2025–2028 term: "I am always inspired by the power of animation to connect cultures, generations, and creative voices across the world. In a time of rapid change, our art form continues to remind us that imagination has no borders. Today, as artificial intelligence and new technologies rapidly transform the creative landscape, we are called to approach innovation with both curiosity and responsibility. These tools can open exciting possibilities for artists, production, and storytelling, but they also challenge us to protect originality, human creativity, fair practices, and the value of artistic expression. Technology should serve to connect us, not divide us — to expand opportunities, not replace the voices that make animation deeply human. In this evolving environment, ASIFA International has an important role to play: supporting dialogue across countries, encouraging ethical standards, protecting creators, promoting education, and strengthening opportunities for the next generation of animation voices worldwide. From emerging talents to established creators, every story enriches our global community. I warmly invite artists, studios, educators, and audiences everywhere to continue building bridges through collaboration, diversity, ethical innovation, and our shared passion for animation. Together, we shape not only the future of our industry, but also the stories that help us understand one another."

For further detailed information:

<https://www.ekkomed.gr/>
<https://www.asifahellas.eu/>
<https://animasyros.gr/>
<https://tafestival.gr/>
<https://www.funnytales.eu/>
<https://graphicstoriescyprus.com/>
<https://asifa.net/>

Aristarchos Papadaniel is Director/ Producer of SYLLIPSIS Ltd., and Founding Member of ASIFA HELLAS

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Ollama Local Deployment Large Language Model Service

DECT-TECH.AI is an innovative company that specializes in designing and producing applications that drive Artificial Intelligence, based on open-source technology. The company is committed to combining AI technology with creative industries, program development, legal affairs and other segments to provide customers with customized and privatized arithmetic devices and solutions.

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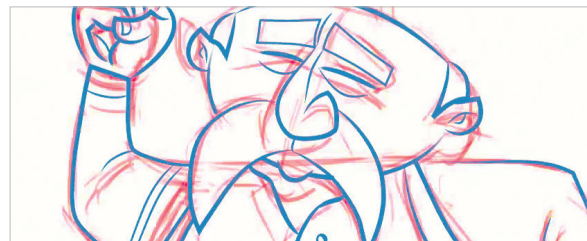


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Blender Studio China

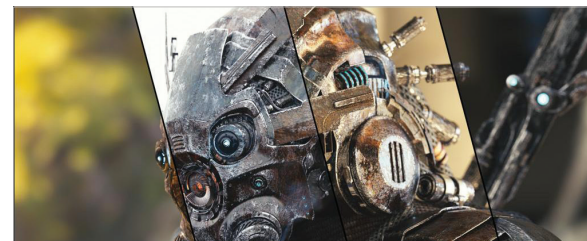
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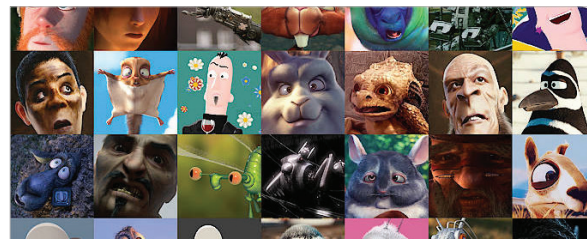
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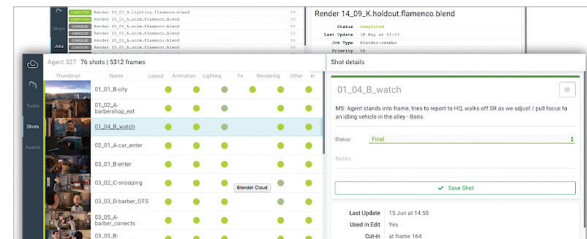
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Blender 5.1 and the Intelligent Open Studio

How MCP is bringing AI-orchestrated 3D creation to Blender - without taking control away from the artist.



Editor: Raymond D. Neoh

Blender has always been more than free 3D software. It is a complete open-source production environment for modeling, animation, rendering, compositing, scripting and pipeline building. With Blender 5.1 and the rise of MCP - Model Context Protocol - that environment is changing again.

From Software Tool to Orchestrated Studio
Blender has always been more than free

3D software. It is a complete open-source production environment for modeling, animation, rendering, compositing, scripting and pipeline building. With Blender 5.1 and the rise of MCP - Model Context Protocol - that environment is changing again.

The key shift is simple: Blender is no longer only a tool artists operate by hand. It is becoming a tool artists can orchestrate. Blender 5.1 itself is a strong production release. It brings faster rendering, better stability, improved

animation performance, updated pipeline compatibility and important new tools such as the Raycast Shader Node. This allows shaders to interact with scene geometry in new ways, opening the door to decal projection, toon shading, NPR outlines and procedural material effects.

But the bigger change is happening around Blender. MCP allows AI assistants to connect with applications through a structured protocol. In practice, an AI model can communicate with Blender's Python API, inspect a scene, create

Two Projects, Two Philosophies



objects, modify materials, run scripts, organize assets and automate repetitive production tasks.

Instead of asking an AI, 'How do I do this in Blender?' an artist can begin asking, 'Do this in Blender.' That is a major difference.

Two MCP Paths, Two Philosophies

blender-mcp Cloud-connected

The Blender community has already produced two important MCP approaches. blender-mcp connects Blender to cloud-based AI services such as Claude and Open Router. It can be powerful, but it requires API access and sends data to the cloud.

blender-open-mcp Local, private, offline

blender-open-mcp works with Ollama and local AI models. It is free, offline and private. For studios handling confidential IP, schools with limited budgets or independent artists without cloud subscriptions, this local path is especially important.

Artist-Controlled, AI-Optional

The most important part of Blender's AI direction is what it does not do: Blender is not becoming a generative AI product. MCP keeps AI outside the core software - optional, user-controlled and provider-agnostic.

Most people still think of AI in creative work as image generation. Blender + MCP points to something more useful for animation and CG: AI as a production assistant. It can block out a scene, generate a Python script, check a file for naming errors, missing textures or non-manifold geometry, and prepare a beginner scene for education. These are real production tasks, not abstract AI tricks.

Commercial creative software is moving quickly toward AI, but much of that AI is cloud-based, subscription-based and tied to proprietary ecosystems. Blender has the chance to offer another model: open software, open protocols, local models and artist control.

The Bottom Line

Blender 5.1 is faster, stronger and more production-ready. MCP makes it more intelligent, more connected and more programmable through natural language. Together, they point toward a new creative environment: the intelligent open studio. It is open-source. It is AI-assisted. It can run locally. And most importantly, it remains artist-controlled.



How Blender Became an Indispensable Animation Tool in Hollywood



Editor: Catina Yiu

The 2023 Hollywood animated film *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* earned multiple nominations at the 51st Annie Awards and emerged as the ceremony's biggest winner, recognized for its varied and distinctive animation styles and visual artistry. Behind the multiverse premise lies animators' relentless pursuit of artistic expression: they experimented with different tools to create multiple visual languages, and Blender is one tool that plays a pivotal role.

Once long regarded as a hobbyist's tool, this free and open-source software has now entered the production pipelines of

the world's leading animation studios. The following three insights illuminate the relationship between Blender and Hollywood, the reasons behind this transformation, and its significance to the entire industry.

Insight 1: Blender's "Blue Ocean Strategy" in Hollywood Animation Production

For years, the animation industry has followed an established division of tools: Maya for animation, Houdini for visual effects, and Arnold for rendering. Blender's arrival did not displace these tools from their core positions in the production process; instead, it quietly earned a place within the pipelines built around them. A 2025 Netflix animated

feature film stands as one of the clearest examples of this.

In Your Dreams, directed by Alex Woo and co-produced by Netflix Animation Studios and Kuku Studios, with its animation and visual effects outsourced to Sony Pictures Imageworks (SPI). Within SPI, Maya remained the backbone of production: the head of character animation acknowledged that "a huge amount of work in the final four months was done in Maya" [1]. Blender was not the foundation of the entire pipeline; rather, it played a crucial role in stylized sequences that Maya was less suited to handle. The film's visual language, spanning from *Dragon Ball Z*-style explosive action scenes to *Sailor Moon*-style transformation sequences, was



precisely where a hybrid toolchain could demonstrate its greatest value.

The same production logic applies to the workflows at Lucasfilm and Industrial Light & Magic (ILM): Maya and Houdini remain the primary production tools, with proprietary APIs managing data compatibility at each handoff. Blender is used primarily during the creative phase for concept art, previsualization, and asset modeling, translating filmmakers'

early visual ideas into 3D storyboards and concept materials, allowing them to communicate their vision more effectively and guide the subsequent production process.

Within this division of responsibilities, each tool contributes its distinct strengths. Blender's role is to complement other tools by integrating the design, development, and production workflow effectively to get the work done.

NETFLIX
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STUDIOS

blender

Insight 2: Grease Pencil as Blender's Key Contribution to Animation Production

The production team behind *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* mentioned in interviews and technical presentations that they wanted to bring a comic-book aesthetic into 3D animation pipeline. They found that conventional 3Dtoon-shading techniques often appeared "clean" and lacked the texture of hand-drawn lines found in comics, so they incorporated Grease Pencil into the production pipeline to handle 2D linework and effects.

Artists can draw varied lines directly onto 3D characters at specific keyframes. Rather than applying line effects through mapping, these lines are projected onto the model's surface and are moved dynamically in response to the character's movements and camera angles. Grease Pencil can effectively render hand-drawn design elements that are difficult to achieve with conventional 3D tools. The final result resembles a vivid comic book, drawing the audience into the story world and allowing them to experience the characters' distinct emotional shifts as the plot unfolds.

At Blender Conference, technical contributors shared their development process: Grease Pencil hand-drawn line data (geometry) completed in Blender was converted and exported to Maya for post-production compositing work [2].

The French animated feature *I Lost My Body*, winner of the Critics' Week award at the Cannes Film Festival, was built on the same principle: it was initially produced in 3D, then given an artistic treatment using Grease Pencil. This approach enables camera movements that would have been structurally impossible in traditional hand-drawn animation. The studio can use CG technology to animate characters and achieve a 2D visual aesthetic within the same software, while rendering high-quality work [3].



Insight 3: Open-Source Tools as a More Inclusive Choice

As early as July 2022, Netflix acquired Australian animation and visual effects studio Animal Logic through a technical integration, forming what is now Netflix Animation Studios. Netflix Animation Studios then joined the Blender Foundation as a corporate sponsor in January 2026, donating 240,000 euros to support Blender's core development, becoming the first major animation studio to publicly make such a commitment.

Netflix's motivations are not difficult to understand. As early as 2018, *Next Gen* became the world's first animated feature film produced using Blender, which was used for animation production, scene layout, lighting, and Cycles rendering. Since then, both mainstream and indie animation studios have begun incorporating Blender into their production workflows. Netflix's investment demonstrates its confidence in Blender's viability within mainstream animation studios. A deeper consideration is the restructuring of industry norms from the technological ground up: transitioning from distributor to corporate sponsor enables Netflix to provide direct feedback to the Blender team, drive core development, and build a business model centered on the autonomy of content, production, and technology.

Netflix is not the only company to have

committed such a substantial investment. Other major corporate supporters, including Epic Games, Anthropic, AMD, Intel, NVIDIA, and Apple, represent companies spanning the fields of game engines, chip hardware, and content technology, all of whom continue to support Blender in various forms. Between 2023 and 2024, the Blender Foundation's annual revenue exceeded three million euros. These funds are directed not only toward core developer salaries, but also toward the maintenance of technical infrastructure and community operations.

What Blender represents is not merely a success story for open-source software, but a more inclusive approach

to technology: large enterprises, indie creators, and developers from diverse fields can work together, improve together, and even co-shape future production pipelines on the software.

Closing

Blender's trajectory within Hollywood's animation industry reflects a shift in how studios approach their toolsets. It creates the most value within existing production processes by addressing stylized production, previsualization, modeling, and specific visual tasks, while also offering animation studios an entirely new avenue to explore creative possibilities



[1] Karen Idelson, "A Little Night Magic in Your Dreams: Director Alex Woo & Team Uncover the Beautifully Crafted Netflix Movie," Animation Magazine, November 2025, <https://www.animationmagazine.net/2025/11/a-little-night-magic-in-your-dreams-director-alex-woo-team-uncover-the-beautifully-crafted-netflix-movie/>.

[2] Blender, "Inklines Across the Spider-Verse - Using Blender at Sony Imageworks," YouTube, October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yHujLeAAsA>.

[3] Ian Failes, "How the 'I Lost My Body' Filmmakers Used Blender to Create Their Startling Animated Feature," before & afters, November 30, 2019, <https://beforeandafters.com/2019/11/30/how-the-i-lost-my-body-filmmakers-used-blender-to-create-their-startling-animated-feature/>.



CGGE
數譜環球

Global Computer Graphics Production Standard (GCGPS)

DECT Institute
Digital Economy Core Technology (DECT) Education

Exhibitions and Events



Our Creative Community:

源创 ORIGIN CG
China's Blender Community

IAICC
国际人工智能及创意大会
International Artificial Intelligence and Creativity Conference

Building a Global CG Ecosystem: CGGE's Mission and Milestones

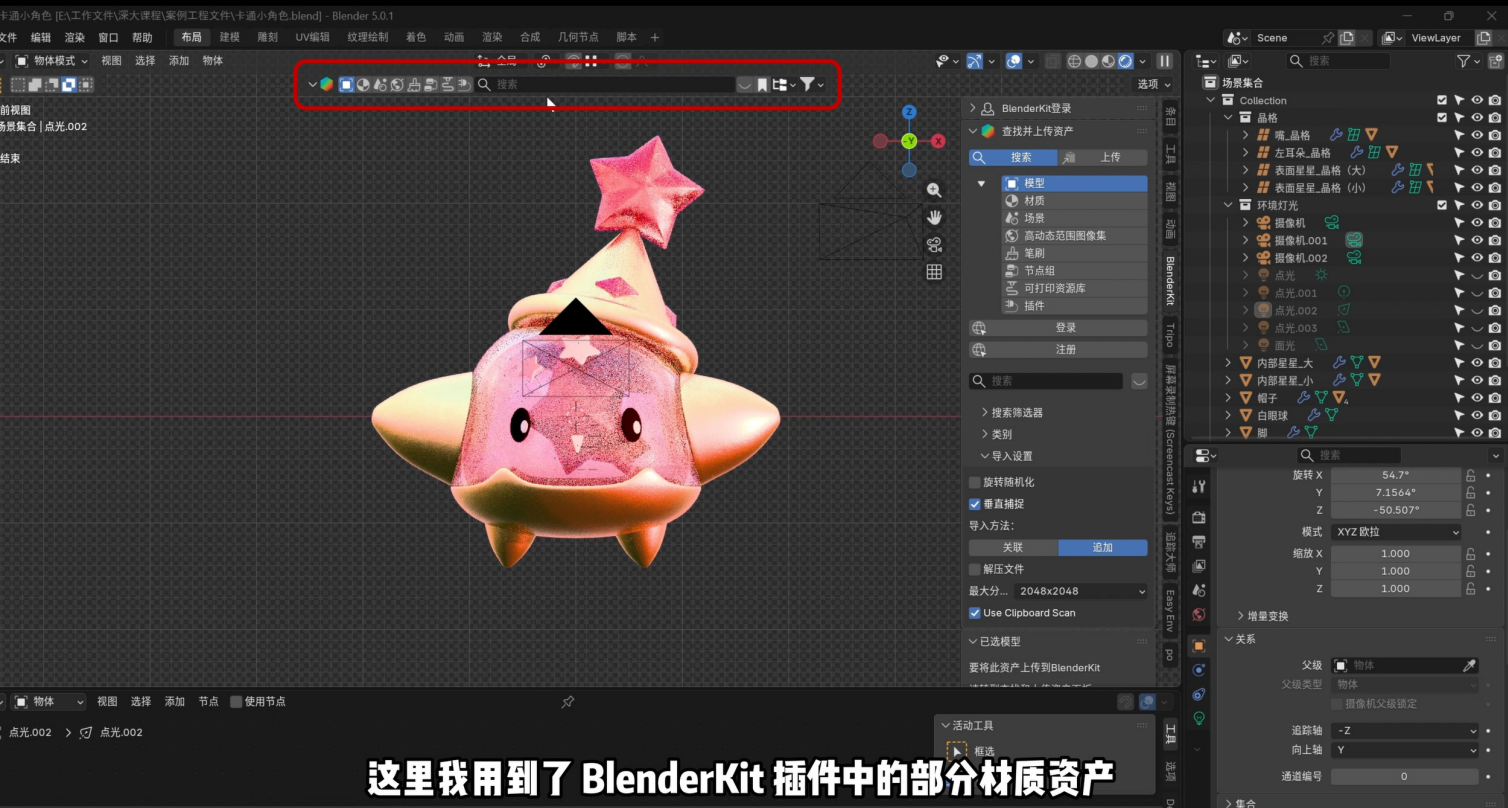
CG Global Entertainment Limited (CGGE), established in 2017 in Hong Kong, is a pioneering force in digital content creation. Specializing in the development of independent technical standards for Computer Graphics (CG), CGGE is committed to building a global ecosystem for content creators through open-source technologies and artificial intelligence.



<https://cgge.media>

OriginCG: From Learning to Creation

Building China's All-in-One Growth Community for Blender Creators



Editor: Raymond D. Neoh, Adrian Chow

In an era where 3D creation is becoming increasingly accessible, a platform that provides systematic learning resources while enabling creators to showcase their work and gain recognition is indispensable fertile ground for every CG artist's growth. The foundation of OriginCG lies in a practical platform: a community for Blender and CG creators across China and Asia. Built around this platform, it connects creators with open-source AI and graphics tools, learning resources, mentors, courses, certifications, portfolio showcases, marketplace features, schools, forums, blogs, and a broader ecosystem of partners — including CGGE,

the International Association of Blender Educators (IABE), Blender Studio CN, and Penpot.

Learning Hub: A Systematic Growth Path from Beginner to Advanced

OriginCG's Learning Hub provides creators at every stage with a clear progression pathway. It brings together a wealth of Blender tutorial resources, covering foundational and advanced techniques across modeling, materials, lighting, and animation, helping users steadily expand their creative boundaries in the 3D world.

On the course partnership front, OriginCG continues to grow its international

network. In 2025, OriginCG entered into a partnership with CG Cookie — one of the world's leading Blender education platforms — translating its foundational Blender courses into Chinese and making them freely available to all registered members in the Learning Hub. The team is currently working to secure licenses for additional advanced courses, including popular topics such as 2D creation with Grease Pencil.

Blender Certification System: Authoritative Skills Assessment Across Six Core Domains

Beyond regular courses, OriginCG has launched a Blender Certification Examination System, providing



authoritative, standardized assessment of learning outcomes. The system covers six core domains — Modeling, Animation, Sculpting, Rigging, Materials & UV, and Lighting & Rendering — with dedicated foundational-level examinations in each area. Upon passing, learners receive a corresponding digital badge and a publicly verifiable digital certificate, directly supporting their academic advancement and career development. OriginCG also offers Penpot Certification, helping designers strengthen their UI/UX skills and expand their modern design-to-code workflows.

Creative Gallery: Making Every Creation Visible

If the Learning Hub is the soil that absorbs nutrients, then the Creative Gallery is the stage where creators bring their work to full bloom. The gallery brings together works from community members in a diverse range of styles and categories — from personal practice pieces to commercial projects, from photorealistic renders to stylized artwork — showcasing the steadily rising artistic standards and technical capabilities of China's Blender Community.

This showcase platform not only gives creators the opportunity to be seen, but also sets a tangible benchmark for newcomers, allowing every user to feel that they are part of an active, warm, and vibrant collective.

Offline Exchange: Bringing Real Warmth from Virtual Community to Genuine Connection

Offline spaces are equally an indispensable part of the OriginCG

community. In 2025, with the hosting of Asia's first official Blender Conference (BCON) in Shenzhen, this online community finally welcomed a large-scale opportunity for face-to-face exchange. The conference not only provided a stage for core developers, artists, and industry leaders to engage in in-depth dialogue, but also gave many community members — who had previously only known each other by their online handles — the chance to shake hands, have candid conversations, and learn from one another in person. This added a genuine human warmth to what had previously been purely online interaction.

Future Outlook: Becoming a Critical Node Connecting China and the World

Looking ahead, the mission of OriginCG will reach even further. It is no longer merely a domestic community, but is growing into a critical node connecting China's creative talent with the global Blender ecosystem. With Chinese Blender users accounting for 14% of the global user base, OriginCG has the potential to:

1. Incubate more local contributors: Encourage and support more Chinese developers and artists to grow — not just as users, but as creators who contribute code, tutorials, and artistic resources to the Blender open-source project.
2. Drive industry adoption: Through case sharing and organized seminars, further promote the practical application of Blender across domestic industries including animation, gaming, and architectural visualization.
3. Deepen international exchange: As a core organizer of Asia's first official Blender Conference (BCON) in 2025, OriginCG has already proven its role as a bridge. Going forward, it will continue to bring global resources to China while showcasing the best practices of the Chinese community to the world.

If you are passionate about CG art, or are looking for fellow travelers on the journey of exploring Blender, joining this vibrant community is the best place to start. Here, alongside like-minded creators, you can use open-source tools to bring unlimited possibilities to life.

OriginCG: <https://origincg.cn/>



When the Cloud Blinks, the Studio Must Keep Creating

Private AI, Public Mission: Why Creative Education And Animation Need Their Own Servers



Editor: Raymond D. Neoh

In animation, nothing is just a file. A character turnaround is intellectual property. A storyboard is the future rhythm of a sequence. A render test is a visual decision. A prompt library may contain the DNA of a studio's style.

A production bible may represent years of world-building. A student project may become a portfolio piece, a short film, a startup, a franchise, or the first spark of a new creative career.

THE CANVAS LESSON: DEPENDENCY IS THE NEW RISK

The warning arrived in May 2026, when Canvas LMS, a learning management platform used by schools and universities, suffered a major cyber incident. For education, the lesson was immediate: when a centralized learning platform is compromised, the damage is not only technical. It affects assignments, exams, grades, communications, reputation and confidence.

Private deployment is not only about privacy. It is about sovereignty: control over data flows, access rules, uptime priorities, internal knowledge, workflow

design and institutional risk.

Your characters stay yours. Your student work stays inside the institution. Your AI workflow keeps running when outside platforms change policy, price or availability.

In addition, the introductory course offers Do not sell AI boxes. Build private AI workplaces. DECT.TECH AI proposes private operating platforms that combine local models, RAG knowledge bases, workflow automation, creative tools, governance controls, training and managed support.

Most creative AI tools today are built around isolated generation. Type a prompt. Get an image. Type another prompt. Get another image. Useful? Yes. Entertaining? Absolutely. Production-ready? Not by itself.

Animation production is not a prompt box. Animation production is a pipeline: scripts, storyboards, animatics, character sheets, environment references, model files, texture maps, rigs, lighting tests, render passes, client comments, approval gates, delivery formats, naming conventions and version control.

Imagine a small animation studio developing a new series. The director uploads the project bible, episode outline, character references, style guide and approved concept art into the local knowledge base.

The producer connects the shot list and review schedule. The art team builds a prompt library. The technical director connects render notes and Blender production rules. The system becomes a private production brain. The character design does not leave the building. The client brief does not enter a public model. The production bible remains confidential.

WHY CIE NEEDS ITS OWN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Creative Intelligence Economy is not only about creativity plus AI. It is about building economic value from human imagination, AI tools, education, production standards, IP development, industry workflows and platform deployment.

The next golden age of animation will need more than exciting tools. It will need secure knowledge systems, protected IP, trained users and industry-specific operating platforms.



**CLOUD WHEN USEFUL.
PRIVATE WHERE IT MATTERS.**



OPC AI Node

One-person creators
Private assistant + document brain

SME Core AI Server

SMEs and offices
Secure search + automation

Legal AI Server

Law firms
Contract review + audit trails

School AI Lab Server

Schools
Teacher controls + curriculum RAG

Studio AI Server

Animation and XR studios
AI generation + production support

TradeOps AI Server

Trade and logistics
Supplier + shipping workflows

University AI Research Server

Universities and labs
Private datasets + model research

Developer AI Server

App and web teams
Coding agents + secure repositories

From Digital Economy to the Creative Intelligence Economy

Why CIE is the new economic model for the AI age



Editor: Raymond D. Neoh

The Digital Economy helped people go online. The Creative Intelligence Economy helps people create, produce, own, and earn in the AI age.

For the past two decades, the Digital Economy shaped how nations, companies, schools, and individuals thought about development. It taught societies to digitize services, connect citizens, build platforms, move commerce online, and use data as a new economic resource.

That model was powerful. But the arrival of generative AI has changed the question. The most important question is no longer only: who has access to digital tools? The more important question is now: who can create value with AI, creativity, knowledge, culture, production systems, and intellectual property?

This is where the Creative Intelligence Economy, or CIE, becomes essential. CIE is not simply the creative economy and not simply the digital economy. It is an integrated system where human creativity, artificial intelligence, education,

production standards, cultural content, intellectual property, platforms, and entrepreneurship work together to generate new value.

CIE as a national development strategy

For national development, CIE directly links technology to talent, industry, culture, education, and IP ownership. A nation that only develops a Digital Economy may become a consumer market for global platforms. A nation that develops CIE can become a producer of stories, games, animation, educational content, AI tools, design systems, cultural exports, digital services, and creative industries.

In the AI age, economic advantage will increasingly come from the ability to combine local culture, creative talent, AI tools, production standards, and global distribution. Countries with strong cultural heritage can use AI-assisted animation, virtual production, game engines, digital museums, immersive education, and multilingual media platforms to turn cultural assets into exportable IP.

The Digital Economy builds the road. CIE teaches people how to drive, design vehicles, build businesses, and create destinations.

CIE for community development

At the community level, the Digital Economy can easily become passive. People scroll, consume, shop, comment, and share. They participate, but often without ownership. CIE changes the role of the community: a CIE-based community is not only a user base. It is a creator base.

Local creators, teachers, freelancers, artists, designers, small studios, cultural groups, youth centers, and community schools can become part of a distributed creative production network. They can create short animations, local history content, educational videos, virtual exhibitions, game assets, AI-assisted comics, community archives, and digital learning materials. Tools alone are not enough. CIE requires training, standards, mentorship, production review, certification, distribution, community platforms, and business models. Without these, AI tools may create noise rather than sustainable value.

A strong CIE community turns creative energy into capability, capability into work, and work into identity, income, and opportunity.

CIE for academic development

Education is one of the most important battlegrounds for the AI age. Traditional digital education teaches software use, browsing, office documents, presentations, and basic coding. These remain useful, but students now need to learn how to think, create, evaluate,

collaborate, document, and produce with AI.

CIE gives academia a broader mission: schools and universities should not only teach digital literacy. They should teach creative intelligence literacy. That means AI as a creative and analytical partner, open-source tools for real production, portfolios rather than exercises, workflow discipline, IP ethics, and entrepreneurship.

For animation, games, design, architecture, media, and digital content education, CIE moves institutions from software training to production-based learning. A student should not only learn Blender as a tool, but also how to combine Blender, AI, standards, storytelling, asset management, rendering, teamwork, and review cycles to produce meaningful work.

CIE and the rise of the OPC

Perhaps the most important part of CIE is its relationship to the OPC - the One Person Company. The AI age makes the OPC more realistic than ever before.

A single person can now use AI to write, design, generate concepts, code, produce images, edit video, build websites, create training products, manage customers, automate workflows, and publish globally. This does not mean one person can replace every profession. It means one capable individual can operate with the power of a small studio.

The Digital Economy gave individuals platforms. CIE gives individuals production power.

The OPC is not just a business format. It is a survival model for the AI age. For young people, it provides a pathway to independence. For professionals, a second career. For creators, ownership. For developing economies, distributed entrepreneurship. For communities, local income without massive industrial infrastructure.

But OPC development requires more than motivation. It needs training, platforms, standards, certification, AI infrastructure, payment systems, content distribution, legal awareness, and community support. That is why CIE is more complete than the Digital Economy: it asks whether an individual can build a livelihood.

The new economic logic

The Digital Economy was built around platforms, data, connectivity, and scale. The Creative Intelligence Economy is built around creativity, intelligence, ownership, production, education, and participation. Digital infrastructure remains the foundation. But CIE is the next layer of value creation: a national development strategy, a community participation strategy, an academic transformation strategy, an OPC survival strategy, and the beginning of a new production era for animation and the creative industries.



Open Source AI Video: The Tools Reshaping Animation & Advertising



Editor: Raymond D. Neoh

Something seismic is happening in creative production — and it is happening for free. In 2025, generating a ten-second AI video clip required either a \$1,500/month commercial subscription or a PhD in diffusion model engineering. In May 2026, the same result takes a single ComfyUI workflow, a consumer GPU, and no recurring bill. The open-source community — led by Alibaba, Tencent, Lightricks, and Skywork AI — has produced a generation of video models that are

closing the quality gap with Sora and Veo faster than anyone in Hollywood expected. This is not an incremental story. It is a restructuring of who gets to tell stories with moving images.

The Tools That Matter

Wan 2.2 (Alibaba, Apache 2.0) is the gold standard for realism. Its Mixture-of-Experts architecture — the first in open-source video AI — separates high-noise and low-noise denoising into specialist pathways, yielding facial detail, skin texture, and hair rendering that matches commercial tools at a fraction of the compute cost. At 14

billion parameters, it handles text-to-video, image-to-video, and video-to-video style transfer at 1080p. The advertising industry noticed immediately: product visualization shots that previously required a live-action shoot can now be generated from a reference photograph.

LTX 2.3 (Lightricks, Apache 2.0) solves a different problem — speed. A 5-second clip at 720p renders in 1–2 minutes on a consumer RTX 4090. That is fast enough to iterate a concept like a sketch. Version 2.3 added native portrait (9:16) output for social media, 48fps for smooth

fast-motion, and synchronized audio generation — meaning a single model can now output a complete short-form video advertisement, sound included, in minutes. For agencies producing hundreds of social variants per campaign, this changes the economics entirely.

HunyuanVideo 1.5 (Tencent, Apache 2.0) is where physics lives. Water, fire, cloth, and fluid dynamics — the hardest class of motion for AI to generate convincingly — are more believable in HunyuanVideo than in any other open-source model. For animation studios producing motion graphics, VFX sequences, or environmental storytelling, this specificity matters enormously. Its dedicated Avatar variant adds portrait face animation from a single reference image: point it at a product mascot, a historical figure, or a client's brand character, and it moves.

SkyReels V2 (Skywork AI, open source) breaks the clip-length ceiling entirely. Using a Diffusion-Forcing autoregressive architecture — each segment becomes context for the next — it generates videos of theoretically unlimited length. Thirty-second demonstrations are confirmed; five-minute sequences are in testing. For long-form animation and branded documentary content, this removes the most painful constraint in open-source video production: the relentless 5–10 second clip limit.

CogVideoX 1.5 (Zhipu AI / Tsinghua, Apache 2.0) is the fine-tuning champion. At 5 billion parameters, it runs on a 16GB GPU — accessible hardware for independent studios and freelancers — and its LoRA ecosystem is the most mature in the category. Train it on a brand's visual identity for a few hours and it will generate on-brand video content with consistent style, character, and color palette. For boutique agencies managing tight brand standards across high-volume output, this is the practical choice.

What This Means for Animation and Advertising: Production Costs Are Collapsing

A 30-second animated commercial



— character models, background environments, motion, lighting, sound design — historically required 8–12 weeks and \$80,000–\$250,000 in production budget depending on complexity. The same deliverable, produced through a ComfyUI pipeline combining Flux 2 Klein (image generation), LTX 2.3 (video), and open-source audio tools, can now be assembled in days for the cost of cloud compute — \$50–\$200 per finished spot at current inference pricing.

This is not hyperbole. A fully documented open-source AI movie pipeline published in May 2026 demonstrates consistent characters across shots, synchronized voice and lip sync, modular scene assembly, and color-matched edit — all running locally, all free after hardware. The

pipeline swaps protagonist and setting by changing reference images; every shot rebuilds from the new references automatically.

The Iteration Loop Has Collapsed

The creative bottleneck in advertising has never been concept generation — it has been the cost of exploring alternatives. When each visual revision required a day of animator time, agencies converged on "good enough" concepts early to control budget. When LTX 2.3 generates ten visual alternatives in twenty minutes, creative teams explore more territory. The risk profile of ambitious creative ideas changes when failure is cheap.

Animatics — rough moving storyboards

used to pitch campaigns before committing to full production — now take hours instead of weeks. Clients can evaluate pacing, timing, and emotional tone from a motion mockup before a single final-quality frame is rendered. That shifts the conversation in pitch meetings from budget approval to creative direction.

Localization and Personalization at Scale

One application that is already in production at larger agencies: dynamic video personalization. Generate a base commercial, then use Image-to-Video to swap the environmental backdrop, character appearance, or product colorway for each target market — all from the same master prompt structure. What previously required separate shoots for each regional market can now be handled in a unified generation pipeline.

Wan 2.7’s Reference-to-Video mode is the most powerful tool for this use case: pass five mixed references — product image, brand character, location photography, color palette, sample music — and the model extracts identity embeddings from all simultaneously, maintaining visual

consistency across any number of output variations.

The Independent Studio Opportunity
The creative economy implication is deeper than cost savings for existing studios. It is the removal of the capital barrier to professional animation production entirely.

A single skilled creative — someone who understands composition, timing, and storytelling — can now produce work at a quality level that previously required a studio of 20. The tools are free under Apache 2.0. The hardware is a gaming PC. The infrastructure is ComfyUI, which runs locally with no subscription. This is the structural shift that matters most. Commercial video AI tools (Sora 2, Veo 3.1, Kling) are excellent — but they charge per clip, prohibit training on outputs, and enforce content policies that limit creative risk-taking. Open-source tools impose none of those constraints. They can be fine-tuned on proprietary data, deployed inside secure enterprise networks, and extended with custom nodes. For a filmmaker in Manila, a content creator in Lagos, or an indie game

studio in Kuala Lumpur, this represents a genuine entry point into professional video production that did not exist 18 months ago.

The Quality Reality
Open-source tools are not yet equal to the best commercial models. Wan 2.2 scores 8.4/10 on photorealism benchmarks; Sora 2 and Veo 3.1 score 9.5/10. Camera control is more basic. Character consistency across long sequences remains challenging. Maximum clip lengths (10 seconds for most models) impose structural constraints on storytelling.

But the gap is closing faster than the commercial vendors anticipated. Wan has shipped three major versions in twelve months. LTX has released three versions in the same period. HunyuanVideo added 1.5 with significant motion improvements. The open-source video AI improvement curve is as steep as the image AI curve was in 2022–2023 — and that curve produced tools that are now indistinguishable from professional photography in many contexts.

For the Creative Professional: Where to Start

The entry point is simpler than it appears:

1. Install ComfyUI — free, runs locally, model-agnostic
2. Start with LTX 2.3 for speed and social media formats; Wan 2.2 for quality-critical work
3. Run on cloud (RunPod, Vast.ai) if local GPU is under 24GB VRAM — cost is \$0.30–\$1.00 per video at current rates
4. Build toward a pipeline — image generation (Flux 2) video (LTX 2.3) audio — the components all have ComfyUI nodes and connect natively

The tools are ready. The question is not whether open-source AI will reshape animation and advertising — it already has. The question is which creative professionals will learn to orchestrate it first.

GCGPS: The Foundation of Computer Graphics Production in the Age of AI



Editor: Raymond D. Neoh

Artificial intelligence is transforming how computer graphics are created, managed, and delivered. Tools that once took years to master are now widely available. AI can generate concepts, build assets, rig characters, and even layout entire scenes in minutes.

But while the tools have become more powerful, the challenge remains the same: turning creative output into production value. Making work usable, repeatable, reviewable, teachable, and ultimately

production-ready:

This is where GCGPS-Global CG Production Standard-steps in as the foundation for the Creative Intelligence Economy (CIE).

From Digital Economy to Creative Intelligence Economy
The digital economy rewarded speed and scale. The Creative Intelligence Economy rewards value and trust.

In the CIE, creativity and intelligence are amplified through people, platforms, and production systems. It is an economy

where ideas are transformed into high-quality content, responsibly and repeatably, across borders and industries.

At the center of this new economy are six interconnected pillars:

1. Production Standards (GCGPS)
2. AI Tools & Automation
3. Krystal Platform (Production OS)
4. Certification & Quality Assurance
5. Education & Workforce Development
6. Global Community & Collaboration

Together, they enable a closed-loop ecosystem where creativity flows, quality is assured, and value compounds.

Why AI Makes Production

AI increases creative output. But without standards, it also increases inconsistency; rework, and risk.

Without a common language, teams spend more time fixing problems than creating solutions.

GCGPS provides that common language. It defines how CG content is structured, named, reviewed, approved, and delivered across the entire production pipeline.

With GCGPS, AI becomes a force multiplier, not a source of chaos.

GGPS as the Operating Standard for CIE

GCGPS is more than a guideline. It is an operating standard for the entire CG production lifecycle.

It covers:

- People & Roles — clear responsibilities and collaboration models
- Pipeline & Process - from concept to final delivery
- Data & Files — naming, structure, versioning, interchange
- Quality & Review - measurable checkpoints and approvals
- Security & Compliance - IP protection, data integrity: global readiness

By adopting GCGPS, studios, educators, platforms, and creators can:

- Improve quality and consistency
- Reduce rework and delays
- Scale across teams and locations
- Build trust with clients and partners
- Future-proof their operations

In the CIE, GCGPS is the foundation that allows innovation to scale responsibly. The tools will keep evolving.

The platforms will keep expanding. But standards are what make the future usable.

GCGPS is not just keeping up with the future. It is helping to build it.



The Tools Layer: Open-Source Creation Meets AI

Powerful tools. Open foundations. Creative freedom.

The GCGPS ecosystem begins with cools, At the heart of this layer is a curated set of open-source creation tools for modeling, texturing. rigging, animation, simulation, rendering. compositing, and more.

These tools are production-tested, community-driven, and free to use.

AI is embedded across the toolchain—not as a replacement for artists, but as a powerful creative multiplier.

From AI-assisted concepting and assistive rigging to automated cleanup, upscaling. and smart nudging. AI handles repetitive work so artists can focus on craft, storytelling. and creative decisions.

This combination of openness and intelligence lowers barriers to entry, expands creative possibilities, and fuels innovation at every level of production.



Krystal Production and Management Platform: Turning Standards into Daily Workflow

Where standards come to life. Where teams stay in sync.

The Krystal Production and Management Platform is the operational engine behind GCGPS. It integrates GCGPS production standards into real production workflows-providing the structure, visibility, and automation neccled to deliver complex projects on time and at scale. Krystal connects assets, people, tasks, and approvals across departments and locations. It offers real-time dashboards, asset tracking, review and approval workflows, version control, and pipeline automation.

By embedding GCGPS standards into every step-from asset creation to final delivery. Krystal ensures consistency, quality and accountability: It turns standards from documents into daily practice.



Certification and Education: Building the Talent Pipeline

Standards need people. People need pathways.

GCGPS is more than a technical system—it is a human development ecosystem.

Through International Creative Intelligence Educators Alliance (ICIEA) and global academic partnerships, we are building structured learning pathways that bridge creativity; technology; and production excellence. Students learn industry-relevant skills, gain hands-on experience, and can certifications that prove they are production-ready:

The IABE Certification validates real competence across roles and departments-recognizing professionals who meet global standards of quality, responsibility, and production readiness.

This ensures the industry has a clear pipeline of skilled, certified talent ready to contribute from day one.



Community Infrastructure: ICIEA and OriginCG

Stronger together. Built for global impact.

No ecosystem thrives alone. OriginCG (Community of Global CG Creators) is the global community where creators collsborate, share knowledge, and push the boundaries of what is possible.

Together, they create the social and intellectual infrastructure that supports innovation, inclusion, and long-term industry growth.



Why This Matters for the Global Animation Industry

This is more than a framework. It is the foundation of a new era.

The global animation industry is at a turning point. Technology is advancing. Audiences are growing. Opportunities are expanding. But without shared scandards, skilled talent, smart platforms, and strong communities, growth becomes chaotic.

GCGPS brings order to complexity by creating a universal langage for production. It empowers creators, raises quality, builds trust, and scales innovation. Most importantly, it ensures that the future of Computer Graphics is open, inclusive, and built for everyone.

● Latest News

● Blender Marketplace

● Certified
Courses

● Creative Square

● School Zone



<https://www.origincg.cn/>

Created by Blender's Official Partner in China

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EDUCATION &
COMMUNITY
教育及社区

ANiMATION
GLOBAL

International Open-Source Creative Intelligence AI Study Camp by Shenzhen University and CGGE



Editor: Leo Xu, Lucas Huang

In 2026, the Division of Arts at Shenzhen University and CGGE entered into a strategic partnership to launch the International Open-Source Creative Intelligence AI Study Camp. This study camp serves as the introductory experiential course for the jointly developed Creative Intelligence AI Film & Game Design Micro-Credential Program, designed to provide students with a low-barrier, highly immersive introduction to the interdisciplinary convergence of AI and digital arts.

The study camp is open to students of all academic years and disciplines. Through participation, Shenzhen University students can join the international open-source platform 'OriginCG Community,' laying the foundation for future enrollment in the micro-credential program and for



becoming next-generation creative AI professionals.

Micro-Credential Launchpad: AI + 3D Integrated Experience Course
The micro-credential adopts a progressive learning model consisting of a study-camp experience course followed by core professional modules. During the first phase, a four-day intensive introductory course is taught directly by CGGE industry mentors. Students work with real-world production cases—including stylized characters and advanced weapon assets—while learning AI-powered content creation pipelines and industry-standard workflows, enabling them to rapidly build foundational skills in 3D content creation integrated with AI technologies.

Course Contents

- Fundamentals and Introductory

Projects: Learn core Blender operations, complete hard-surface asset modeling, recreate iconic cartoon characters, and transform rendered images into animated sequences using AI image-to-video generation workflows.

- **Advanced Weapon Modeling Production:** Using weapons from well-known game titles as case studies, students learn advanced techniques such as topology flow optimization, hard-surface edge control, and beveling workflows to produce production-ready weapon blockouts.
- **AI-Assisted Model Cleanup and Material Refinement:** Introduces AI-generated 3D asset workflows, focusing on repairing geometry issues, correcting material errors, and understanding the practical applications and value of AI-assisted content creation.
- **Materials, Environments, and Final**

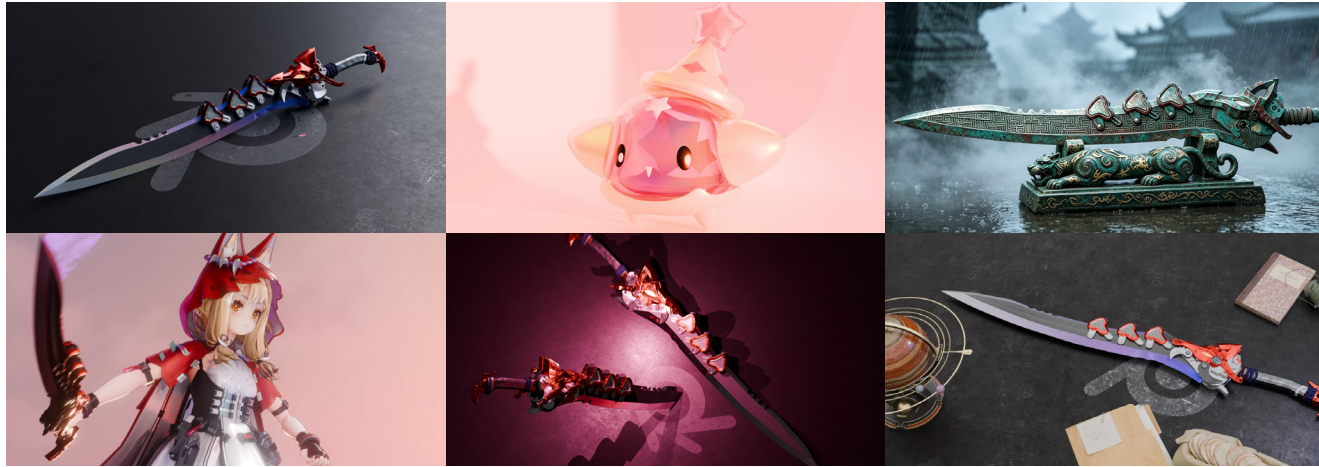
Output: Learn material creation, multi-lighting setup techniques, and final rendering workflows to produce portfolio-quality imagery suitable for professional presentation.

In addition, the introductory course offers an optional extension module in UI/UX Design and Penpot workflow practice, helping students develop interface design skills while preparing for the official Penpot Certification examination.

Certification and Growth Pathways: Direct Access to Professional Training and Industry Practice

Students who complete the program will receive certification from the International Alliance of Blender Educators (IABE), a globally recognized credential for Blender 3D skills endorsed by representatives from more than 20 countries.





Outstanding participants may receive priority admission opportunities for the Fall 2026 Creative Intelligence AI Film & Game Design Micro-Credential Program at Shenzhen University, sponsored by CGGE.

They may also participate in AI game development and AI short-film production projects through the international open-source platform OriginCG Community, gaining real-world production experience and earning income through online commercial commissions.

Industry-Education Integration: Building a Complete Talent Development Ecosystem

CGGE will prioritize outstanding students from both the study camp and micro-credential program for internships and international collaborative projects, creating a complete development pathway of Study Camp, Micro-Credential, Certification, to Industry Practice or Employment.

This pioneering model of Open-Source Co-Creation and Industry-Education

Integration provides a scalable and replicable framework for cultivating digital creative talent in higher education. In the future, the Division of Arts at Shenzhen University and CGGE will continue to deepen their collaboration, fostering multidisciplinary creative AI professionals equipped to meet the evolving demands of future industries.



Become Our Partner in Blender Education

A training and certification system that validates Blender users, trainers, and institutions with recognized credentials.

As an educator, you can support our industry-backed and evidence-based certification ecosystem.

- Co-develop programs: Participate in public training curricula and certification framework design
- Get certified: receive formal recognition in foundational and specialized Blender topics, aligned with Blender Badges
- Form institutional partnerships: Schools, studios, and educational institutions can become certified partners listed on our registry
- Share resources: Contribute to our teaching materials library, and share your best practices with the community



Join Us
<https://iabe.io>

IABE: Building the Missing Competency Framework for Blender Education

IABE turns scattered Blender learning into a structured, evidence-based competency pathway — connecting learners, educators, schools and industry through shared standards.



Editor: Catina Yiu, Raymond D. Neoh

“Blender has already democratized the tool. IABE helps democratize the pathway to recognized capability.”

Blender has transformed how people learn and create 3D content. Yet learning remains fragmented: tutorials vary in depth, schools lack a shared reference, and portfolios are often difficult to compare. The International Alliance of Blender Educators (IABE) aims to address this gap by building a competency framework where Blender skills can be taught, evidenced, assessed and governed through a common pathway. It gives learners, teachers, employers and institutions a common reference point.

From Open Learning to Recognized Capability

IABE’s value is practical: structured certification does not replace creativity with exams. It gives learners, teachers, employers and institutions a common reference point. A good framework makes invisible production skills visible - file organization, modeling discipline, material setup, lighting, rendering, animation timing, revision habits and the ability to deliver work others can review and continue working on.

Three core elements make up the key provisions of IABE:

Governance	Physical evidence of capability: Blender files, rendered outputs, task submissions and production records.
Pathway	A progressive learning route: from entry readiness to production delivery and specialist tracks.
Evidence	A trust system: versioned standards, assessor calibration, appeals and quality assurance.

Benefits from a Global Ladder for Blender Talent

IABE can help connect informal creativity with formal opportunity. The strongest open-source communities do not only produce software; they produce talent - artists, educators, technical artists, animators, game designers and creative technologists.

For stakeholders within IABE, there are a myriad of benefits that can be gained from a mutually recognized framework of recognition:

For Learners	Move from beginner readiness to practical Blender capability through clear stages, hands-on tasks and evidence-based recognition.
For Educators & Schools	Align Blender lessons with common learning outcomes, practical tasks, assessment rubrics and certification pathways.
For Studios & Industry	Understand what a learner can actually produce through verified files, rendered outputs, task submissions and production evidence.

Governance

The organization behind the IABE initiative is positioned as an education and training infrastructure builder focused on digital economy skills, creative technology, open-source tools and certification pathways.

A global Blender competency framework needs more than curriculum and exams.

It requires governance to support: clear level definitions, consistent evidence requirements, assessor calibration, standard versioning and quality review.

A global Blender education alliance cannot be built by one school, one company or one region. By involving educators, artists, studio practitioners and assessment advisers, IABE can protect quality, update standards over time and ensure that recognition reflects real, reviewable Blender capability. It needs advisors across art, education, studio production, open-source contribution, curriculum design, certification, youth learning and international industry practice.

Such an institution must also maintain several core qualities:

- Trust, that IABE will protect community values such as openness and transparency;
- Quality, that IABE will uphold standards by requiring meaningful evidence of learner achievements, rubrics, assessor calibration and sample review;
- Relevance, that IABE will adapt standards to Blender updates, school needs and industry practice, and developments in the global creative industry

Learn more and follow the latest developments on the IABE official landing page.
<https://iabe.io/>



Ubiquitous Research on History & Cultures in the Age of AI



■ Fabricated history and misinformation flood people's feeds

Editor: Jiasong (Jackson) Gong

The widespread adoption of LLMs (large language models) has lowered the threshold for historical and cultural research to an unprecedented degree. Researchers can now access vast bodies of literature spanning thousands of years within seconds. However, AI hallucination and online misinformation have created new academic traps. This paper explores practical methods for AI-assisted historical research, emphasizing the necessity of combining digital resources with traditional academic training. It aims to provide contemporary researchers in history,

literature, and cultural studies with an actionable technical guide.

Introduction

There was a time when historical research meant leafing through rare books page by page in dust-filled library archives, or gazing at cultural relics from a distance through the glass cases of museum displays. Today, by simply entering a question into an AI, one can receive what appears to be a detailed “academic research.” Yet this convenience comes at a cost: AI can solemnly fabricate nonexistent ancient texts, imaginary historical figures, and events that never occurred. Its realism is often convincing

enough to deceive researchers who lack professional training.

Practical Methods for AI-Assisted Research in History and Culture

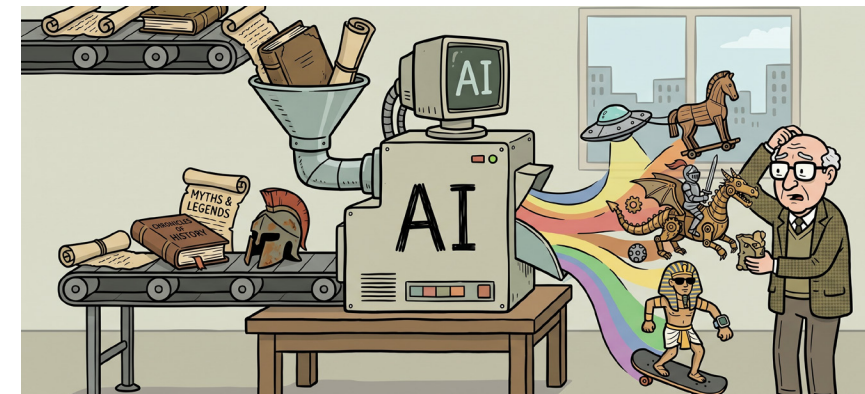
First, AI should be treated as a “literature navigator” rather than a “content producer.” The greatest value of high-quality AI tools such as Perplexity does not lie in generating conclusions, but in rapidly locating primary sources. Just as the reference lists on Wikipedia often function as true academic treasure troves, the citation links provided by AI can frequently lead directly to authoritative platforms such as “Shidian Guji” and the digital collections of the National Museum

of China. This allows researchers to bypass tedious search procedures and engage directly with first-hand materials.

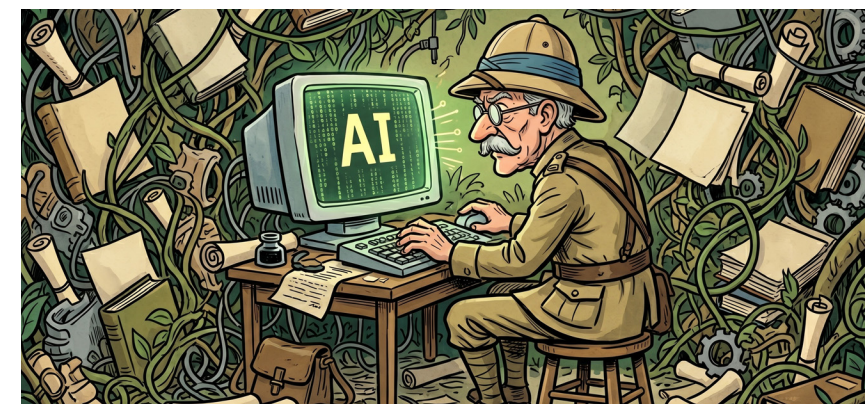
Second, researchers should make effective use of multilingual cross-verification. AI corpora are shaped by obvious linguistic barriers, and the same historical event is often presented from very different perspectives in Chinese and English sources. For example, when

studying Zheng He's voyages, Chinese-language materials tend to emphasize official records and maritime technology, while English-language materials more often include archaeological discoveries along the East African Swahili coast and local oral traditions. Combining these perspectives can help construct a more complete historical picture.

In addition, since AI-powered search



■ AI-generated hallucinations



■ Finding information with AI in the jungle of data



■ Academic foundations and rigor remain essential

is itself based on digitized databases, many historical materials and humanistic customs that have not yet been digitized, or cannot be incorporated into digital databases, still require traditional methods; such as contacting knowledgeable individuals or conducting fieldwork in local communities. This is also a point that is easily overlooked in modern research: what remains invisible within big data.

Finally, AI can be used to uncover “invisible connections.” Traditional research is limited by the capacity of human memory, as well as by the inherently complex nature of multi-field research, making it difficult to detect subtle links scattered across different documents. AI can scan millions of words within seconds, identifying potential relationships among people, events, and places, and thereby providing researchers with unexpected research leads.

Discussion and Conclusion

AI is, in essence, an “amplification tool.” It can amplify the abilities of excellent researchers, but it can also amplify the errors of the uninformed. Without a solid foundation in history, cultural studies, and material culture, researchers cannot distinguish truth from falsehood in AI-generated content. In the end, they will simply be led around by hallucinations.

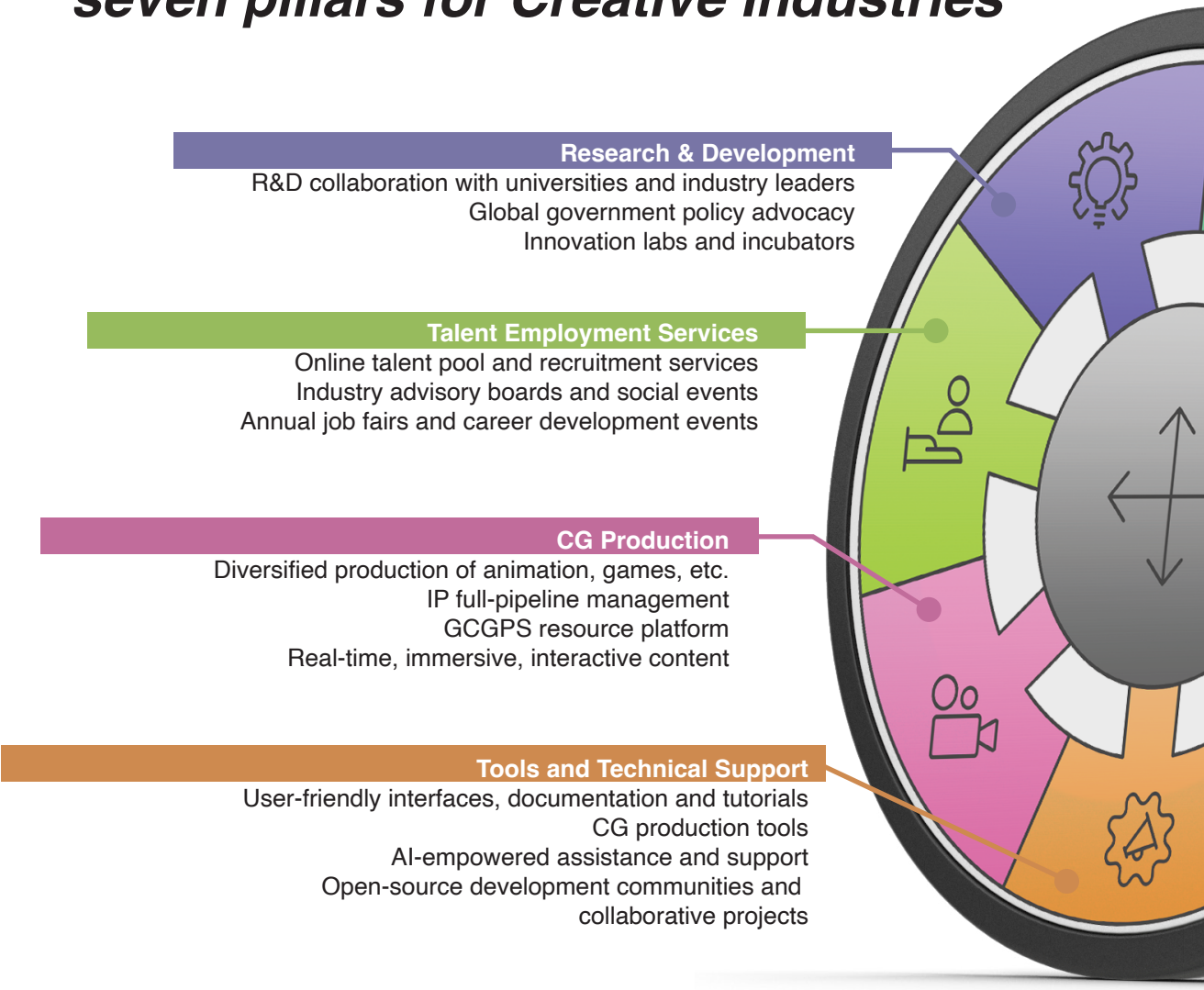
In this age of information overload, one of the core abilities of historical researchers has shifted from “obtaining information” to “evaluating information.” We do not need to reject new technologies, nor should we blindly rely on them. When AI opens millions of doors to the past, what ultimately determines what we are able to see remains our own knowledge and judgment.

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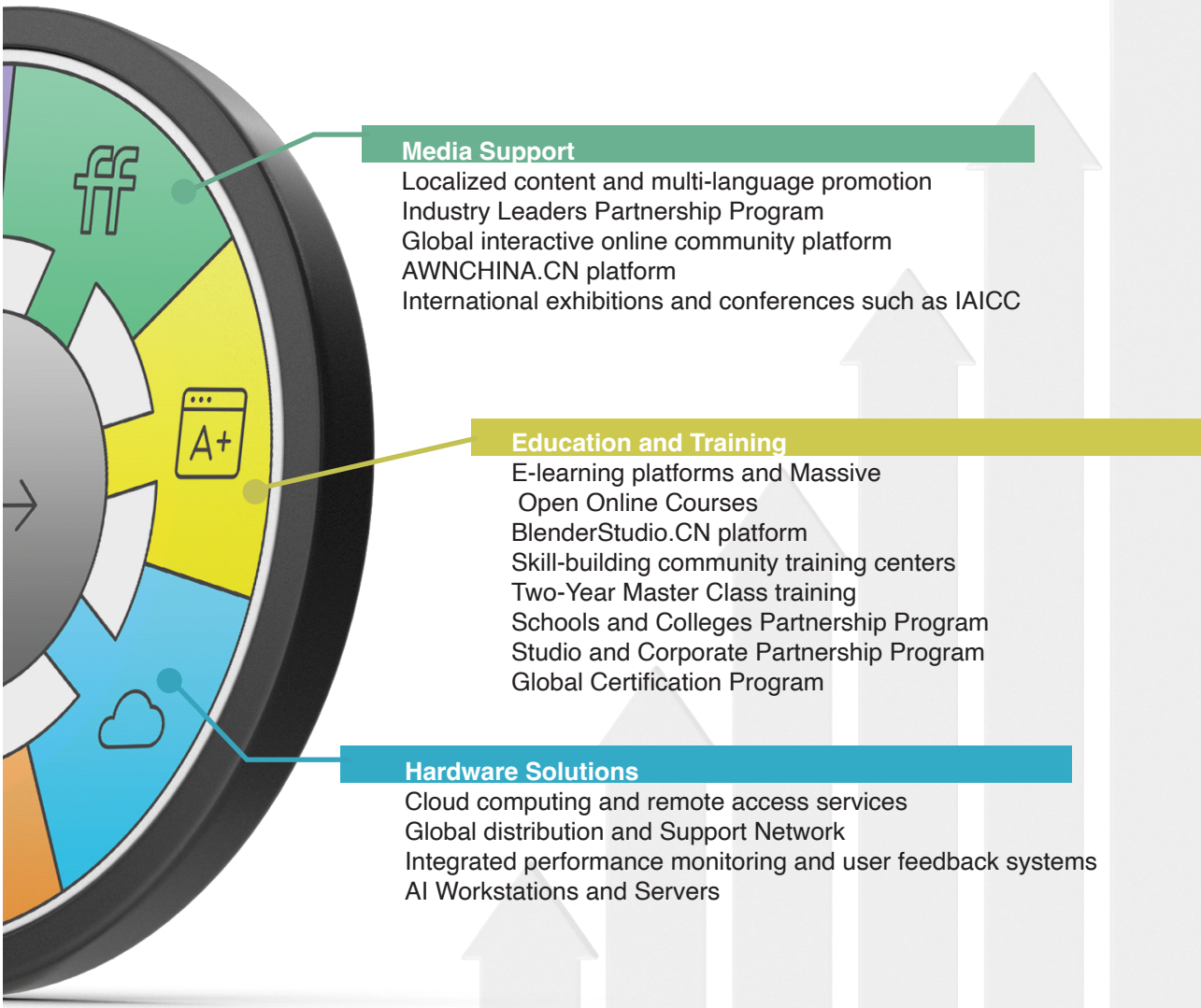
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Building a Unified Standard to Lead Global CG Innovation

The DECT Ecosystem provides seven pillars for Creative Industries



The Global Computer Graphics Production Standard (GCGPS) is a transformative proposal for the Computer Graphics (CG) industry to standardize workflows, foster innovation, and make tools and knowledge accessible worldwide. DECT Group has taken decisive action to transform Creative Industries, and we welcome like-minded people to join us in bridging the global digital economic divide.





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