

STEPHAN KOZAK

CREATIVE DIRECTOR • ART DIRECTOR • PRINCIPAL ARTIST

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Award-winning creative and art leader with 20+ years spanning film, television, advertising, games, immersive media and applied research. Leads multidisciplinary teams from concept through final delivery, combining visual judgment, hands-on craft and production systems thinking. Known for turning complex creative and technical challenges into clear direction, achievable scope and finished work.

20+

years across art, VFX & design

4

recent films & series led

20+

screen & festival awards

1

patented virtual-human pipeline

LEADERSHIP VALUE

- Sets visual direction across character, environment, animation, VFX and technical art while keeping decisions grounded in story, audience and production scope.
- Builds high-trust teams through clear expectations, actionable feedback, mentorship and early resolution of cross-disciplinary blockers.
- Connects artists, directors, producers, engineers, researchers and clients—translating creative intent into pipelines, schedules and deliverables.

EXPERIENCE

Executive Visual Effects Supervisor / Principal Investigator | Cream Productions | 2024–Present

- Leads creative and technical direction across film and broadcast, supervising work from previs and plates through look development, animation, compositing and final picture.
- VFX Supervisor and Look Development Artist on The Westies for Amazon; aligned artists, production and technical workflows around a consistent visual language.
- Designed and developed the creature for Dream Eater (Netflix) and led the creature's VFX execution from concept and testing through final shots.
- VFX Supervisor on The Pond, premiering at TIFF, and Ice Cream Man, now in theatres; delivered plate work, matte painting, animation, compositing and effects.
- Develops AI-assisted VFX and animation pipelines that improve iteration, production clarity and delivery across projects including Life After People and Piano Man.

Principal Investigator / Lead of CG, Animation & VFX | Sheridan College SIRT | 2016–2024

- Led multidisciplinary research and production teams across character, animation, VFX, software development, virtual production and real-time experiences.
- Built and evolved teams, secured multi-partner funding, managed external collaborators and translated research goals into production-ready prototypes.
- Directed partnerships with Meta/Oculus, Microsoft Azure, SideFX, AMD, Transport Canada, Cream Productions and others.
- Invented the Dynamic Digital Humans mixed-reality character pipeline (U.S. Patent 11,436,782; PCT/IB2020/050502), later commercialized and used in award-recognized immersive work.
- Advanced open-source generative animation through M-body.ai and contributed to accessible sign-language characters, AI-supported elder-care experiences and culturally representative virtual humans.

EXPERIENCE, CONTINUED

Principal Artist | Lakeview Animation | 2004–2015

- Directed art and technical workflows for animation, VFX, virtual humans, commercials and interactive experiences—from boards and design through final compositing.
- Created characters, environments and visual systems using modeling, rigging, texturing, lighting, simulation, animation, rendering and real-time pipelines.
- Partnered with clients including Disney, Pixar, Universal, Paramount, Coca-Cola, Unilever, RBC and leading Canadian broadcasters.

VFX Supervisor / Technical Director / Artist | Corus • Shaw Media • Canwest | 2006–2016

- Supervised and delivered broadcast campaigns, network identities, advertising and live-event content across 2D/3D animation, matte painting, VFX and compositing.
- Owned campaign design, scoping, budgeting and delivery while collaborating with producers, agencies and internal creative teams.

Compositor / VFX Artist | IMAX | 2006

- Team lead on the stereoscopic conversion pipeline for Superman Returns, contributing compositing, Z-depth and rotoscoping to the first full-length live-action IMAX 3D feature.

Motion Designer / 3D Animator | Alliance Atlantis • Soho | 2000–2006

- Helped design and launch specialty television brands including BBC Canada, Discovery Health, Food Network, HGTV, History Television, IFC, National Geographic, Showcase, Action, Diva and Slice.

SELECTED INNOVATION & RECOGNITION

- Marija — led digital creative work on the first virtual human recognized with real-world citizenship.
- Survivorman VR / Dynamic Digital Humans — contribution to a 2024 Canadian Screen Award-winning immersive experience.
- M-body.ai — Principal Investigator for open-source conversational-animation datasets, standards and tools supporting generative character animation.
- 20+ screen and festival awards, including 12 international festival accolades; regular speaker on creative technology, AI, virtual humans and production pipelines.

EDUCATION

Master of Digital Media (in progress) | Toronto Metropolitan University

Bachelor of Arts & Science — Art and Art History; Research Methods; Statistics | University of Toronto

Diploma, Fine Arts | Sheridan College

Autodesk Maya Certification | University of Toronto

CREATIVE & TECHNICAL FLUENCY

Leadership: Creative direction, art direction, visual development, team building, mentoring, client presentations, production strategy, scoping, budgeting, external partners.

Craft & pipelines: Creature and character design, look development, VFX supervision, animation, compositing, virtual production, real-time rendering, motion capture, digital doubles, procedural systems, generative AI.

Tools: Figma, Adobe Creative Suite, After Effects, Photoshop, Illustrator, Premiere, Maya, Houdini, Nuke, Resolve, Unreal, Unity, Blender, ZBrush, Substance, Mari, Omniverse, Faceware and modern AI/VFX toolchains.