CG Conversation with 3d visualization designer André Kutscherauer

"I just can say that the most important property of a good 3d artist is basically his level of fascination"

André Kutscherauer , an amazingly talented 3d artist from Germany, portrays his excellency in technical skills as well as deep rooted visualization ideas, giving top notch renders that are savored at the best CG forums and galleries.

*This is what he had to say to the readers of **Animation Xpress** in a CG conversation with **Poonam Shah**.*

Website: http://www.ak3d.de/

Could you tell us something about yourself?
My name is André Kutscherauer. I'm 25 years old and I'm currently employed in a photo studio in Munich, Germany. Here I'm doing 3d visualizations of design pieces. I'm the only 3d artist here, but I have three photographers around me. They are the hardest censors that a 3d artist could possibly have! After work I try to realize some own ideas.
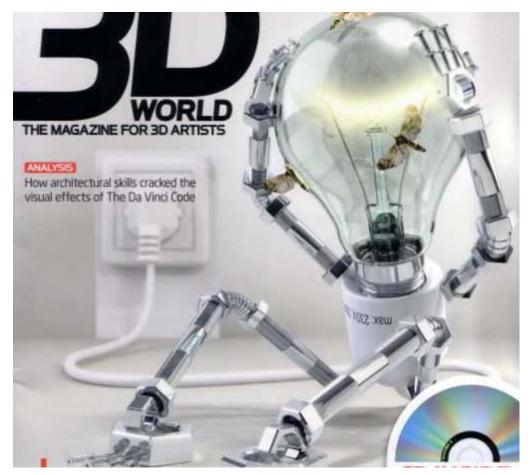
ANDRE KUTSCHERAUER   -   SELFILLUMINATION   -   WWW.AK3D.DE

Self-Illumination: 3ds max, mental ray, PS

Andre's "Self Illumination" won most of the possible CG awards!
To list a few- 3D total frontpage award, Animago Award Rank 1, Expose
magazine Award; also got included in Raph gallery, Art of the week
award at digitalart.org, got featured at CGSOCIETY.org, Image of the
day at 3dkingdom.org and the list continues...

How does winning so many Awards feel?
Oh, of course it does feel very good. Endless days I saw the work of other
talented artist before that get these gems of this sector. That was quite
motivating for raising my own level. This was quite a lot of work. In the
time as I made the most of my pictures I got to do a 12h job day by day
at the photo studio. Only after this time and on weekend I was able to
work out my own picture ideas. But after all, these awards were worth it!

Renders at 3d WORLD

What inspired you to render such a different concept, which portrays excellence in technical skills along with humor?

I think the key to this picture was the time that runs up just before I could start to realize it. Some weeks passed by before I was able to do just the first mouse click on this picture. So I could deeply think about this whole scene and meaning. Sometimes it's good to have some time before creating pictures. Of course often the initial enthusiasm could be more important, too.

You used 3ds max and rendered with mental ray for the render. Is this what you normally use or was the image requirement?

This configuration is actually what I normally use excessively in my job as 3d operator. Because I'm not allowed by our customers to publish most of my design visualizations, I searched a way to take this acquired knowledge of materials and lights to realize some of my own ideas. I think I will stay with mental ray for a long time
as it covers all of the features I need. It gives the necessary flexibility, too. V-Ray and Maxwell of course are great, too.
I've seen many really impressive pictures of them,
but at the moment I can't find features in those renderers
that mental ray is missing. (Besides usability)

Spoontower: 3ds max, Mental ray

How did you go about lighting the scene?
The lighting of this scene is basically a standard studio setup.
There are three lights. Two big area lights (left and right) andone spot
from top to get this more defined shadow on the ground. The rest comes
from the nonfake physical shaders.

Tell us something about the rigging process of the bulb
The rigging of this bulb was quite simple. It is basically the standard biped
of character studio and I matched the proportions to the bulb and finally
linked all the screws on the bones of this setup. After finishing the pose
I matched the parts on the elbows und knees manually with bend modifiers.

Fairplay (remote control matchball) 3ds max, Rhino, Mental ray, PS

The render has a soft glow. Was it post produced?
The soft glow was post produced in Photoshop to give the whole scene
a little more "HDR" feeling. It's a masked outside glow layer effect.

Brokenmind: 3ds max, zbrush, mental ray

Could you tell us about the modeling process for Broken mind?
The modeling process of Broken Mind was quite a pleasure for me. It was
the first time ever that I have used Z-Brush and my Wacom Tablet.
The time as I created this head model was fantastic. Despite the workflow
of Z brush takes getting used to, I was extremely impressed by the intuitive
and motivating possibilities of modeling with Z-brush. It's just like forming
plasticine, but with Ctrl-Z function. It's a pity for me that I use this great
new tool much too rare!

Did you use any plugin to tatter the mesh?
No. This mesh is tattered by hand on polygon level. With the shell
modifier of 3dsmax the parts have got their depth.

**Was this also rendered in Mental ray? Could you discuss
the lighting process?**
Yes, as nearly all of my pictures it was rendered on Mental Ray, too.

The key to the light of this picture was a lighting box for the reflections.
There are area lights, too, but the main materiality comes from the reflectors.

ANDRE KUTSCHERAUER - DANDELION OF SCREWS - WWW.AK3D.DE

Dandelion of Screws: 3ds max, Rhino, Mental ray

**The concept of Dandelion looks interesting. How did you go
about modeling it? Were the screws instanced?**
Oh yes. Because of the extreme high polygon count of this scene
(More than 3 millions), I had to find a way to keep it editable in the Viewports
of 3dsmax. Every Screw has got a real 3d thread.The key was an X-Ref
Structure. Basically there are 2 screws.All the others were loaded just
on rendering time on demand.In the Viewports, only simply proxy objects
were shown.This makes the render process even much more exciting.

Spoonflower: 3ds max, mental ray

**You have achieved some amazing metal shaders and reflections
in render "The Spoonflower". Any special tips?**
It's all not magic. It's just like taking photos! The shader on this picture
is a real simple reflection material. There's no falloff map or such things
included. All of the materiality comes just from the "offscene" – scene.

Out of all your artworks, which stands your personal favorite?
I think "Self illumination" is my personal favorite. It was the "directline"
from brain to picture. After all the aspects of this picture were clearly
in my brain I just realized it within 3 days. There have been no blindalleys,
or other retarding things. There was not a single momentwasted on it.
I wish it could go always this way.

Who is your mentor/hero in the CG world?
I don't really have a mentor or hero in the CG world. But of course
there are some artist that makes pictures which impressed me a lot.
Some of these peoples are Thomas Suurland, Meats Meier, Tim Borgmann,
Antropus or Joana Garrido. They all did some very interesting pictures
and got a unique style that inspired me. Aside the CG World I'm most
impressed by Leonardo da Vinci. To get just a little fraction of his
incredible imagination and creativity would be my ultimate goal.

What are your future plans?
In the near-term I like to make more holidays to get out of the stress
and to free my brain. I like to make more sports and I like to just enjoy
the briefly warm days of Germanys summer. After that I would like to
enhance my portfolio with new pictures. I always wanted to be a part
of a big movie project like lord of the rings. But after some time of working
in photo studio I think pictures are my true passion. They are directly, you
can make them on your own, without a big team and they are most

compatible with the internet. For me it's now a dream to be a free
illustrator that mainly realizes his own ideas, just like famous photographers
that make their own photo arts.But I know that thiswill stay a dream.

**Any message you would want to give to the readers of
animationxpress? Any advice to wanabe 3d artists?**
I just can say that the most important property of a good 3d artist
is basically his level of fascination. The more you are interested in
this theme, the more you will understand about the reality. All the needed
features like a more sensible perception of reality and allthe technical
knowledge will come to you if you just got a deeply interest in this theme.
Tutorials can bring you to a certain kindof level. To get higher you've just
got to open your eyes andjust look into the reality. Read less – Watch more!

- Poonam Shah