

Cici Zheng

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SUMMARY

VFX artist and Houdini generalist specializing in stylized FX and procedural workflows across film, animation, and real-time projects. Experienced in USD pipelines, custom HDA development, procedural modelling and animation, FX setups that improve efficiency and achieve art-directed goals. Gnomon graduate (Best of Term winner) with experience leading and collaborating on group productions, driven by a passion for visual storytelling, quick to adapt to new pipelines and softwares, and always eager to grow alongside a team.

CORE SKILLS

Houdini: Dynamic FX (FLIP, MPM, Particles, Pyro, RBD destruction, Vellum), Procedural Animation & Modeling, Copernicus, Karma / Solaris, USD pipeline, HDA/Tool Building, VEX/Python Scripting

Maya: Krakatoa, Phoenix FD, Bifrost, MEL/Python Scripting

Unreal Engine: Niagara, Sequencer

Render Engine: Karma, RenderMan, Vray, Arnold, Redshift

Compositing: Nuke, DaVinci Resolve, Adobe After Effects

EXPERIENCE / PROJECTS

Thawed - FX, USD pipeline, Texturing and Look development, Compositing.

Nov 2025 - Feb 2026

- Complex custom particle systems and secondary pyro simulations, delivering stylized snowflake FX tailored to strict art direction.
- MPM simulations for dynamic character/snow interactions, achieving realistic look with efficiency.
- Procedural modelling using L-systems to generate snowflake variations efficiently.
- Procedural animation using ray blending, noise mask, and VDB mesh carving to achieve a fully art directable speed and timing control.
- Established a USD pipeline to streamline cross software collaboration between Houdini and Maya.
- stylized look development in Copernicus, with Karma/Solaris rendering and Nuke compositing using render layers for efficient iteration.

Guidance - FX, Environments building, Lighting and Compositing.

Oct 2024 - Apr 2025

- Large scale FLIP simulation and whitewater for a shoreline, segmented into different resolution zones base on distance to camera.
- Built the large scable environment in Houdini using heightfields with SpeedTree shoreline vegetation scattered across the landscape.
- Guided hair simulation for the character's hair, replicating natural wind-driven motion.
- Lighting and rendering in Karma/Solaris and compositing in Nuke, utilising light linking, layer holdout and AOVs for ultimate efficiency.

AWARD & RECOGNITION

Gnomon Best of term - Winter 2025

Animation and Scene Category

The Gnomon Scholarship 2022

Award for Artistic Excellence

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Fine Arts, VFX concentration

Apr 2022 - Jun 2025

Gnomon School of Visual Effects, Games & Animation, North Hollywood, CA, USA

3D Animation Foundations - CUA20220

Apr 2021 - Oct 2021

Academy of Interactive Entertainment, Ultimo, NSW, Australia + Online distance study