

Diana Donado Bornacelli

Animation Director & Technical Animation/Art Director | Department Leadership | Pipeline Architecture | Gameplay & Cinematic Direction

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Professional Summary

Animation Director and Technical Animation/Art Director with 15+ years of AAA experience leading and building departments on both the creative and technical sides of animation. Equally capable of setting and driving animation vision across a full production as directing technical animation teams, designing pipeline architecture, and implementing runtime systems in Unreal Engine 5. Has built animation and technical animation departments from scratch at multiple studios simultaneously — establishing culture, processes, quality benchmarks and team structure on both sides. Currently completing a Vertex School certification in Technical Animation and Technical Art, deepening expertise in Houdini, Substance 3D Painter & Designer, shaders and procedural workflows. The rare leader who can run the creative department, run the technical department, or run both — and build the bridge between them.

Key Skills

Animation Direction & Leadership	Technical Animation / Art Direction & Leadership	Cross-Discipline & Production Leadership
• Animation Vision Setting & Creative Direction • Gameplay Feel, Responsiveness & Player Feedback • Cinematic Storytelling & Character Performance • Mocap Direction — Combat, Performance & Facial • Animation-Gameplay-Cinematic Continuity	• Technical Animation Department Leadership • Pipeline Architecture & Workflow Design • Procedural Animation & Motion Matching Systems • Rigging Systems — Character, Mechanical & Facial • Shader & Technical Art Pipeline Development	• Department Building from Scratch — Both Sides • Cross-Discipline Collaboration: Animation, Design & Engineering • Feature Ownership from Prototype to Implementation • Mentorship & Team Development at All Levels • Scalable Documentation & Production Practices

Professional Experience

Consulting Animation Director / Technical Animator

Inevitable Studios | July 2025 – Present | Remote

- Directed gameplay and cinematic animation for Always in Mind; prototyped locomotion systems in Unity using state machines, blend trees, and procedural layers.
- Collaborated with engineering and design on animation logic integration; mentored animators on system-driven animation and technical implementation.

Animation Director (Consulting)

Saber Interactive / Mad Head Games | June 2024 – Dec 2024 | Remote

- Directed animation vision for an unannounced AAA title; defined guidelines, documentation standards, and review processes across gameplay and cinematics.
- Partnered with engineers to implement gameplay animation systems in Unreal Engine 5 including Animation Blueprints, state machines, and runtime logic.

Head of Animation / Animation Director

2K Global Services – IR | June 2023 – Dec 2024 | Ireland

- Built and led a new global animation department supporting multiple AAA titles including BioShock — directing mocap, gameplay, technical animation, and cinematic teams.
- Defined scalable pipelines supporting locomotion frameworks, blend spaces, and state machine-driven gameplay systems; mentored senior and junior animators.

Animation & Cinematic Director

Splash Damage | June 2022 – June 2023 | UK

- Directed gameplay, combat, and cinematic animation for Transformers: Reactivate — reduced character delivery from 6 weeks to 7–12 days through pipeline redesign enabling parallel art, rigging, and animation work.
- Partnered with engineers on UE5 animation systems; directed mocap performance ensuring emotional cohesion between storytelling and gameplay.

Head of Animation Department / Animation Director

Starbreeze Studios | September 2020 – October 2022 | Sweden

- Led both animation and technical animation teams — directing animators, technical animators and animation programmers simultaneously.
- Directed gameplay animation for Payday — 160+ weapons with realistic handling; built automatic hand-positioning systems and internal mocap capabilities.
- Introduced documentation and onboarding systems that increased delivery speed and quality consistency across departments.

Head of Animation Production / Production Director

Epic Animation (Cubic Motion) | August 2019 – May 2020 | UK

- Led animation delivery for Spider-Man: Miles Morales, Ratchet & Clank, and Little Hope across a 55+ person studio; drove R&D improvements during the Epic Games acquisition.

Head of Animation / Animation Director

Rebellion Development | October 2018 – September 2019 | UK

- Built and directed both the animation department and technical animation capability from scratch.
- Directed animation across Zombie Army 4, Sniper Elite 5, and Evil Genius 2; built two mocap stages and grew the animation department from scratch across multiple studio locations.

Earlier Career (Condensed)

Cinematics Lead & Senior Producer | Asobo / Microsoft / Remedy | 2015–2016 — Directed all cinematic animation, mocap/VO, and VFX on Quantum Break; ensured runtime integration between gameplay and cinematic systems.

Lead Animator / Associate Producer | Ubisoft | 2012–2015 — Directed gameplay animation on Rabbids Land; created asset conventions and early production pipelines.

Senior Producer / Cinematic Lead / Game Product Manager — Dead Island 2, The Chainsmokers VR, V-Rally 4 (Sumo Digital, Kuju, Kylotonn) | 10+ years in film & TV animation before transitioning to games.

Technical Animation Highlights

Designed and implemented terrain adaptation and foot placement IK systems in collaboration with engineering (Starbreeze). Built motion matching and avoidance systems from the ground up (Starbreeze). Developed automatic weapon hand-positioning system for 160+ weapons (Payday). Reduced character delivery pipeline from 6 weeks to 7 days through parallel workflow redesign (Transformers). Secured dedicated animation programmer and built runtime locomotion systems from scratch (Splash Damage). Currently developing procedural animation, shader workflows and Houdini VFX pipelines (Vertex School 2026).

Selected Projects

AAA: BioShock, Transformers: Reactivate, Payday, Spider-Man: Miles Morales, Ratchet & Clank, Quantum Break, Zombie Army 4, Sniper Elite 5, Evil Genius 2, Dead Island 2, Always in Mind **VR/AR:** The Chainsmokers: Paris VR, Fragments (AR), Marvel Disney Season

Technical Skills

Animation Systems:	IK, FK, Motion Matching, Procedural Animation, Locomotion Frameworks, State Machines, Blend Spaces, Animation Blueprints, Runtime Integration, Foot Placement, Avoidance
Tech Animation Engines	Control Rig, Blueprint Logic, In-Engine Prototyping, System Setup & Debugging, Tool Development Partnership
Engines	Unreal Engine 4/5 (Blueprints, Sequencer, Control Rig), Unity — proprietary engine experience (Rebellion)
DCC Tools:	Maya, MotionBuilder (10+ years), 3DS Max, ZBrush, Substance 3D Painter & Designer, Houdini, Nuke, Python (Maya/VFX)
Pipeline:	ShotGrid, Perforce, Jira, Hansoft Pipeline Architecture, Workflow Design, Documentation Systems
Certification:	Vertex School — Certified Technical Animator/Artist (In Progress, 2026) — covering Houdini, Substance 3D Painter & Designer, procedural animation, shaders and technical art pipelines.

Education & Certifications

MBA, Film & Video Game Management — IIM Digital School | **Master in Animation, Filmmaking & VFX** — EICAR Film School | **Postgraduate Management Sciences** — Dauphine University

Vertex School — Certified Technical Animator/Artist (In Progress, 2026) | **Animation Mentor** — Advanced Animation & VFX | **CGMA** — Python, Rigging, Facial & Mechanical Rigging

Languages & Community

Fluent: English, French, Spanish | **Basic:** Portuguese, Italian, Swedish

Women in Games Ambassador | Grads in Games Mentor