

Mackevision

Project:
Mackevision (www.mackevision.com)

Autodesk® Maya®
Autodesk® 3ds Max®
Autodesk® Showcase®

We created a customized workflow based on the strengths of Autodesk Showcase, Maya and 3ds Max software. Our databased workflow, which we call HUGO, lets artists go in, choose a car, interior, wheels, color, background, etc, all while the car appears to be driving through a scene. Every asset is configurable.

—Heiko Wenczel
Manager, Digital Division
Mackevision

When Real Is Not Enough

Mackevision Uses Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Maya to Visualize, Animate, and Realize Every Aspect of Virtual Cars, Buildings, and More



Images courtesy of Mackevision

Summary

Stuttgart, Germany-based Mackevision is a 15 year old creative company with some serious skills. Originally a straight-ahead post production and editorial house, the company branched out into 3D technical animations and visualizations for the architectural, pharmaceutical, and automotive industries right around the time that early versions of what we now call Autodesk® 3ds Max® software appeared on the scene.

Today, having grown to more than 70 creative employees in Stuttgart, Munich, and Pontiac, Michigan and serving some very big clients, especially in the automotive industry, Mackevision has evolved into being a true creative partner to its clients. Specializing in post production, data consultation, and as a systems provider and creator of the most mindblowing 3D visualizations you are ever likely to see, Mackevision counts Mercedes-Benz, Chrysler/Jeep, Volkswagen, BMW, AUDI, Porsche, Ford, and a host of other clients as enthusiastic, repeat customers. To deal with increased demands and their own growing ambition, Mackevision has expanded and revolutionized the pipeline to work with Autodesk® Maya®, Autodesk® Showcase®, and Autodesk 3ds Max software, among other products.

Heiko Wenczel, Manager of Mackevision's Digital Division, sat down to explain its pipeline and flat-out dazzle us with their work.

The Challenge

"Mackevision has been creating high-quality 3D stills and animation for at least ten years now," says Wenczel. "For the last six or seven years, we've had a solid reputation and steady work in the architectural, pharmaceutical, and automotive industries. Probably our biggest challenge in our history, however, came when Mercedes approached us about the relaunch of its webpage. It was too good an opportunity to pass up, but we knew we'd need to create many thousand CG visualization pictures in just six months. We also knew at that point that Mackevision was in for some radical changes."

In what amounted to a complete reinvention of the company and its way of working, Mackevision not only hired more people, but devised a new and revolutionary workflow:

"We had to fundamentally rethink Mackevision," explains Wenczel. "With the volume of visualization work we would be encountering, we needed a pipeline using all manner of automated processes together with a strong compositing system. We have an incredibly talented staff, but it was also necessary that our workflow not be dependent on any one individual artist. Now, we ensure that all our assets are fully configurable—from the CAD data provided by clients to each stage of our creative process, are stored in our comprehensive database—and can be easily recreated by whichever artist is working on it."

The Solutions

Not content to be simply overwhelmed with print and web work, the Mackevision team soon became intrigued with inserting its creations into full-motion scenes. Working this time for Chrysler, Mackevision was charged with shooting backgrounds for car scenes in which, in some cases, the hero car had yet to be built.

"We went out and shot locations without having the actual car there," says Wenczel matter-of-factly. "It was on that Chrysler job that we began thinking about a system that enables our pipeline to the configuration system that we created for stills to also be used for motion. We had a few challenges obtaining data in the optimal format for our animation systems, but we eventually created a customized workflow based on Showcase, Maya and 3ds Max software to convert the data. Our databased workflow, which we call HUGO, lets artists go in, choose a car, interior, wheels, color, background, etc., all while the car appears to be driving through a scene. We were the first to prove that you can have top quality images that can be inserted into a scene of your choosing."

The Results

After viewing Mackevision's precisely crafted still images and animations, one could be forgiven for believing that they could revolutionize not only the way that automobiles are promoted and sold, but also how they are conceived, designed, and created. Mackevision-created computer graphic (CG) views of luxurious car interiors not only convey the emotion of traditional photography, they are, amazingly, more accurate than any photograph could be:

"We consider interior pictures and extremely detailed close-ups to be our specialty," Wenczel says. "We work hard to give the impression that a photographer actually composed, lighted, and shot the interior of the car. We want viewers to feel they can reach out and stroke the leather. The fact is, however, that many of these images would not be possible with a single camera, no matter how sophisticated. With CGI, we are able to view interior details from not just one, but many, definitive focal points. In this way, we can provide an image that looks like a photograph, but also draws the eye to many important features. This is the true beauty of CGI. You can go beyond reality."

Similarly, extremely precise close-ups of interior details are made possible through Mackevision's customization of Autodesk 3ds Max, Maya, and Showcase software packages.

"We are really about creating the highest quality, highest resolution imagery," Wenczel explains. "On top of that, we ensure that all of our assets are fully configurable and reusable. For the intricate stitching on the seats, for instance, we've created various tools within our Autodesk products and pipeline that allow us to modify the CAD data provided by the manufacturer so that it will react like real stitching; leather will fold and bulge into creases and seams, just the way real material would, but complete creative and artistic control is maintained."

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—Heiko Wenczel,
Manager, Digital Division,
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