

ASK THE ARTISTS: DANIELA DÉNEŠOVÁ



ASK THE ARTISTS: DANIELA DÉNEŠOVÁ

Daniela, who is better known under her stage name Deja VJ, has worked as a visual artist and designer for well over ten years. Her talent has brought her all the way from the Prague underground club scene to prestigious television shows. We spoke with her about VJing, her love for big screens and dinosaurs.

Ventuz:

When did you first get in contact with 3D technology?

Daniela:

When I was about ten I saw the movie Jurassic Park. It was the most amazing thing I had ever seen, but I was very sad when I learned that those weren't real dinosaurs. My father explained to me that they had been created with computers. That was an exciting idea to me, because it meant that I could create stuff like that. My excitement must have been pretty obvious – I remember that my father back then, over 20 years ago, said to me: You will be an animator.

Ventuz:

And that triggered you to create your own 3D content?

Daniela:

I was lucky that my father was into computers and we actually had a computer at home. He helped me to install Autodesk Animator – this was before the internet and it took a lot of floppy disks. I just played around with it, very childish stuff, but it was fun. A few years later I started to go out at night and visited the techno clubs in Prague, and there I learned about VJing. I was instantly hooked. So, just like when I was ten, I downloaded some VJ tools and just started to create my own shows.



I made videos, taught myself After Effects and combined it with 3D elements. What started out as a hobby ended up paying my bills.

Ventuz:

So you never studied to get – what they call – a real job?

Daniela:

I went to university for a few semesters studying physics and mathematics. But I never finished, I was partying too hard and VJing too much. I thought: If this is what I love doing and I can live off it, why not? I also took a design course at some point, but it didn't teach me much.

Ventuz:

That must have been an exciting time in your life.

Daniela:

It was a lot of fun. The Prague club scene was great, I hung out with all my friends, partied and did VJing until six in the morning. There was a large VJ scene in Prague back then. Everyone was really open, we taught each other new tools and techniques. At some point, I don't quite remember when, I learned about a VJ group called Phase.



Those guys were amazing, I loved their work and wanted to be like them so much. They took me in and we started to work together. Things began to change from that point on. VJing became more structured, we concentrated more on entire projects instead of just blasting out graphics. At Phase I met some of the people I still work with to this day.

Ventuz:
How did you move from the club scene into more commercial projects?

Daniela:
Companies approached us. Technologies became cheaper and businesses wanted to create large shows that wowed people, so they came to us for content. The shift really happened by itself, we didn't have to do much.

Ventuz:
What kind of projects did you realize?

Daniela:
Everything that had large screens or projections: company events, public events, large TV shows. It all started out at the same time. When the technologies came into the

market, people quickly understood that we were the only ones who could control them. One of my first commercial events must have been the Czech Beauty Contest 2011, where I did content and playback for the backdrop walls in the studio. That was a pretty large event and I was very nervous.

Ventuz:
When were you introduced to Ventuz?

Daniela:
It wasn't really an introduction. Some of the guys from Phase had been using Ventuz, so I was aware of what it could do. But I only started to work with it when we went into the commercial market. A friend of mine had been running a project with Ventuz. He had done the first show but couldn't do the second, I don't remember why, so he called me to help out. I went to the show and was forced to learn Ventuz within a few minutes. It was tough, but the show had to go on and this was the only way. It worked out fine and I loved Ventuz instantly. That was more than ten years ago, and I haven't found any other software tool that I would rather work with.



Ventuz:
So you started working with Ventuz 2008, the very first commercial version. How do you like what Ventuz has become over the years?

Daniela:
I like it very much. I have been playing with the PLE version of Ventuz 5, and it is pretty amazing. I hope to be able to get even more familiar with it over the summer when there is not so much work. But I have always enjoyed Ventuz, I work with it every day and I love it.

Ventuz:
How have things evolved for you since you first started working with Ventuz?

Daniela:
I have always been a freelancer, but my contact with the guys from Phase is still strong. A few of them founded an agency called XLAB Realtime, and I have become a fixed member of their team, even though I still freelance. I have other job offers, but I really love the guys at XLAB Realtime. Also they do some of the largest shows in the Czech Republic: the annual Beauty Contest, music award shows, concerts, fashion shows. There is no need to work for anyone else.

Ventuz:
How do you share the workload at XLAB Realtime?

Daniela:
Our standard workflow is: a Ventuz designer is responsible for logic and playout programming. Graphic content is made in cooperation with 2D/3D specialists. Live playout and programming on events is controlled by a Ventuz designer and/or operator. However, I am a very messy girl. That clearly shows in my Ventuz scenes. I don't think anyone else could find their way through them but me. Therefore, I do everything: I design content, create logic and organize playout.

Ventuz:
How do you prepare for projects?

Daniela:
It really depends on the client. If we work with a show director who knows me, then I sometimes get to do whatever I want. But usually I get a briefing, I prepare a few things, I come to the venue, put my stuff on the screens and then the director will tell me what to change. Most of my work actually happens on the venue.

Ventuz:
How come?

Daniela:
It is hard for people to imagine what things will look like at the venue, even when I show them on my computer screen. When graphics and light and architecture and audience come together, the director realizes that this part needs to have a different color or that text needs to be larger – things like that. And I have worked with so many directors before, they know that I can make all these changes due to the real-time nature of Ventuz, so they will use that opportunity. It is one of the reasons they like working with me. So I am working inside of Ventuz until the last second before the show.

Ventuz:
Tell us about your favorite projects.

Daniela:
For me it is really about the people I work with. Especially the crew around the big TV events – Beauty Contest and music shows – is a lot of fun to work with. We always have a good time. Also, we know how everyone works.

The architect knows that I work with Ventuz and he understands how he needs to set up a stage, the director knows how I work, and I know what they need from me. That takes a lot of the stress out of the work. I value that very much.

Ventuz:
What technologies are especially interesting for you?

Daniela:
We have just started to experiment with Virtual Reality at XLAB Realtime. Everyone is really excited about that. But to be honest, I really like my big screens. In my view, there are a million things you can do with video walls and projection, so I don't really fuss over new technologies too much.

Ventuz:
Do you have a dream project that you would really like to realize?

Daniela:
Not so much a project, but I would really like to work with Hamish Hamilton once in my lifetime. He is the director of the most recent Super Bowl Halftime Shows. Many show directors don't really care much about video, but this man does. He uses light and video in equal amounts and creates some amazing shows that way. I would really love to be a part of one of his projects.





Ventuz Technology AG

Luttherothstrasse 16a
20255 Hamburg – Germany

P. +49 40 413 66 09 70

info@ventuz.com
www.ventuz.com

Ask the Artists: Daniela Dénešová

By Katharina Glück, Ventuz Technology AG
June 2016 © Ventuz Technology AG