

COMPANY

Many Many Creations Ltdwww.manymany.asia

LOCATION

Hong Kong

SOFTWARE

Autodesk® Maya®**Autodesk® 3ds Max®****Autodesk® Smoke®**

Many, Many Reasons to Use Autodesk for CGI Animations

From modest beginnings, Many Many Creations has grown swiftly, to become one of the top CGI animation companies in Hong Kong – and has done so partly thanks to the advent of affordable yet outstanding software, including Autodesk Maya, Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Smoke.

“The software is powerful, and the whole industry depends on it, other than companies with their own in-house software”

—**Mr Kwai Bun**

President

Many Many Creations



Image courtesy of Many Many Creations

Many Many Creations president Kwai Bun started the company in 2004. He had studied multimedia as a graduate student, and especially enjoyed animation, which he decided to try pursuing as a career. For three months, Mr Kwai worked for an animation company, but he quit on receiving art development council for a project. “I won an award, and this encouraged me to think my animation could be appreciated,” he recalls.

Mr Kwai set up a small company with a friend, initially operating in a village house. They began with small projects, creating still images. Their first animation was like a how-to guide to using a coffee machine. Then came the chance to work on a TV commercial, which Mr Kwai found very exciting. They performed a test, received the commission, and this soon led to further work as word of mouth spread in Hong Kong, and to Malaysia, where Many Many Creations has often worked since.

Growing, and delivering professional services

“There were only two or three animation houses in Hong Kong at the time,” says Mr Kwai. “Previously, the start up threshold was high, but you could then

start with minimal investment – we initially had only two computers.”

Mr Kwai says he was “quite green in terms of business”, yet found it fulfilling to move ahead, learning as he played roles as producer and animation director, gave presentations, negotiated contracts and applied for awards. “We became quite known in the industry, through active marketing – such as in Indonesia, Shanghai, and Beijing,” he says. “We know how the advertising industry works.”

As the team grew to over ten members, Many Many Creation moved to the heart of the city, nearer to clients. “We’re based on delivering professional service,” remarks Mr Kwai.

Affordable software that’s increasingly user friendly

The Many Many Creations team uses several Autodesk software solutions, Autodesk Maya, Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Smoke. “The software is powerful, and the whole industry depends on it, other than companies with their own in-house software,” says Mr Kwai, who observes the individual software solutions are affordable.



Image courtesy of Many Many Creations



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The workflow for creating an animation starts with the director and pre production team working on character designs and concept drawings. The images are then entered to Autodesk Maya or Autodesk 3ds Max, to start modelling work. Modelling motion is followed by work on textures, then texture lighting, and rendering.

Comparing Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Maya, Mr Kwai says the former is especially suited to architectural jobs; its origins were in CAD, so it copes well with hard surfaces. "Autodesk Maya is more efficient for effects and character motion," says Mr Kwai, adding, "The difference between them is blurring, and they are similarly powerful."

In Many Many Creations, the choice of which software to deploy depends on human resources – which of Autodesk Maya or Autodesk 3ds Max do particular animators know best. "Before, the two software solutions didn't talk to each other," says Mr Kwai. "But after a software update, including a focus on integration, you can easily send files between Autodesk Maya and Autodesk 3ds Max." Through Autodesk adopting industry standards, like the Alembic file format, Mr Kwai finds that human resources can be more fully utilised.

Many clients require online editing, and Many Many Creations use Autodesk Smoke as the software for this – such as showing clients what the artists are working on, and collaborating with them in making some changes in real time.

Smoother-than-ever functionality

Mr Kwai observes that the Autodesk products have become more user friendly over the years. For instance, the learning curve for Autodesk Smoke was formerly quite high, but the last two

versions have been really user friendly.

Prime examples of the team's recent creations include the "Next Generation Rail Connection" commercial for Hong Kong's MTR Corporation, which includes an animated cartoon drilling machine dipping below the city. Plus, "Ocean Park X'Mas Party Show Special" – with echoes of the hit movie Finding Nemo.

"Autodesk Maya provided many useful functions for these projects," says Mr Kwai. "For the MTR film, we integrated some Autodesk 3ds Max human resources, which is how Autodesk's integrated suite excels. The smoother-than-ever collaboration functionality allows us to seamlessly send important assets between Autodesk 3ds Max and Autodesk Maya – effectively expanding our team size and flexibility in project management."

For the MTR film, Autodesk Maya tools enabled faster creation and animation than possible with typical animation software. "Autodesk Maya has been world-renowned for its animation and rigging tools since version 1," notes Mr Kwai. "Thanks to Maya MEL – Maya Embedded Language – which provides a flexible platform for further development, we wrote our in-house rigging scripts. By doing so, a lot of back and forth rigging iterations can be automated, which shortens the turn-around time to clients, enhancing the service quality our brand is based upon."

Extending Autodesk Maya to create realistic digital humans

But Mr Kwai is not content to simply use off-the-shelf products. For five years, he has been developing a system for high quality digitised human animations, which he calls Quantum Human. This is based on Autodesk Maya, which

enables users to extend functionality through programming.

"There are a lot of low end character systems, but at the high end there are none for the public," says Mr Kwai. "I'm aiming to make this publicly available, so people can more easily do things like Avatar." While it might take a year or two for research and development to create a believable digital human, his vision is to enable the process to be automated through programming.

Quantum Human is based on the fact that there are similarities between all human forms, such as facial muscles. By studying muscles, facial expressions, psychology papers and even make up, Mr Kwai is creating a system for making digital humans appearing far better than those from lower end software. "Autodesk is encouraging my work," he says. "If it works on the production side, I would like to expand Quantum Human."

Mr Kwai also plans to expand Many Many Creations, from purely focusing on graphics to delivering entire campaigns.

About the customer

Many Many Creations is a Hong Kong based creative company, working on TV commercials, along with new media projects like outdoor LED walls, event and shows multi-projections, dome-projections, interactive installations, and web sites. In addition to being execution specialists, they serve clients through creative pitching, live-action shooting production, interactive design, audio production, etc.

To date, it has served over 200 brands, with clients including Citibank, Standard Chartered Bank, Coca Cola, M&C Saatchi, Ogilvy & Mather, JWT, JCDecaux, and Philips.