

FROM SKETCH TO RENDER

WITH BINYAN STUDIOS





CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT

Binyan Studios founder and CEO Andrei Dolnikov discusses crafting narrative experiences through design visualization, the latest industry trends, and why 3ds Max is his tool of choice.

Q. TELL US ABOUT BINYAN STUDIOS.

Binyan Studios is a global creative content production company for the architecture industry, with offices located in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, London, New York, and Los Angeles. We specialize in producing visualizations that accurately depict how an architecture concept or design will look once built, using a variety of techniques that include still 3D renderings, film and animation, broadcast-quality commercials, and digital experiences, like immersive VR tours.

Our clients are property developers and architects who typically need to sell, lease, or promote a new development or concept, whether it be a luxury tower in New York, a resort in Dubai, or a shopping center in London.

Q. CAN YOU PROVIDE DETAILS ON ANY RECENT PROJECTS?

We've recently completed renderings that transform the iconic Brutalist-style Sirius Building in Sydney into a new development that offers breathtaking views of the Sydney Opera House and Harbor Bridge.

In Brisbane, we worked on a vertical garden for Aria Property that was designed by architect Koichi Takada, and the visualization was re-shared on Instagram by Sir David Attenborough. We've also recently worked on a photoreal animated film for the Rivière by Aria in Brisbane, as well as renderings for a resort-style development for the Howard Hughes Company in Honolulu.

““ **The wow moment is very inspiring; it's what drives the work.** ””

Q. WHAT ARE THE MOST INSPIRING ASPECTS OF THE WORK THAT YOU DO?

The design process starts with a brief from renowned architects like Sir David Adjaye, Frank Gehry, B.I.G., or Zaha Hadid. We'll receive a basic sketch, and from there, you start to envision the potential of what the concept might look like when built.

It's an extremely gratifying process, developing a flat architectural sketch into a full 3D rendering that is iconic, emotive, and makes the client say, "Wow!" That kind of journey and the wow moment is very inspiring; it's what drives the work.





Ward Village Hawaii, Courtesy of Binyan Studios

Q. HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE INDUSTRY?

I studied interior architecture in my youth, and early on in my career, I began to fall in love with the 3D rendering aspects of the job. It blends my interests in architecture and design, while incorporating influences from photography and filmmaking. I started to take on freelance rendering jobs, and over time, I slowly developed my business into Binyan Studios. We've gone from a five-person team based in Australia to a global staff of more than 100. Today, more than half of the work we produce is for international clients.

Q. WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES THAT YOU FACE DURING PROJECTS?

The biggest challenge is collaborating with multiple stakeholders on complex projects that often take years to develop.

It takes a lot of effort to manage partners who are located in different time zones around the world. This includes everyone from interior designers and landscape artists, to sales and leasing agents.

We're currently working on a large project in California that is going to completely transform its precinct. The project is in a relatively early design phase and will be developed over a number of years; however, we're tasked with developing accurate visualizations of how the final product will look, even though many of the elements are in different phases of development and design. This is both an exciting and challenging process that takes all of our experience to bring to life – but in the end, it's very gratifying.



I began to fall in love with the 3D rendering aspects of the job



Q. CAN YOU DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL WORKFLOW FROM BEGINNING TO END?

First, we receive a client brief, which might ask for 20 renderings or animations, in addition to detailing brand guidelines, overall look, and target demographics. We'll review the materials and develop a reverse brief from a more creative perspective, while also conveying tone, artistic direction, and different project options.

While the client signs off on the creative, we gather all required information and technical details from the various stakeholders, including Revit or DWG files from the architect and designer.

Next, in the process, we begin working in 3ds Max – our main content creation tool – to model all of the different areas that will be depicted in the visualization.

Sometimes we are able to work directly with the architect's Revit model (with minor optimization and refinement), but typically, we handle the majority of a project's bespoke modeling directly in 3ds Max, in order to incorporate more refined details.

Following the 3D modeling phase, the next step is composition, where we explore the best time of day, lighting, and angle to portray the architecture model. We approach this process like a photographer arriving on site to scope out the best compositional approach. For animations, here we focus on how to virtually film the project.


Once the client has signed off on the composition, we manage color production, texturing, lighting, landscaping, and people in activation and show the client a near-final color draft. After the draft has been approved, we render everything and complete all post-production, using tools like Adobe Photoshop for stills, Houdini and Phoenix for animation, and Fusion for compositing, among others. For digital experiences or VR projects, we are also involved in the physical installation of hardware and developing custom software to help the project come to life.



Q. WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE 3DS MAX FEATURES?

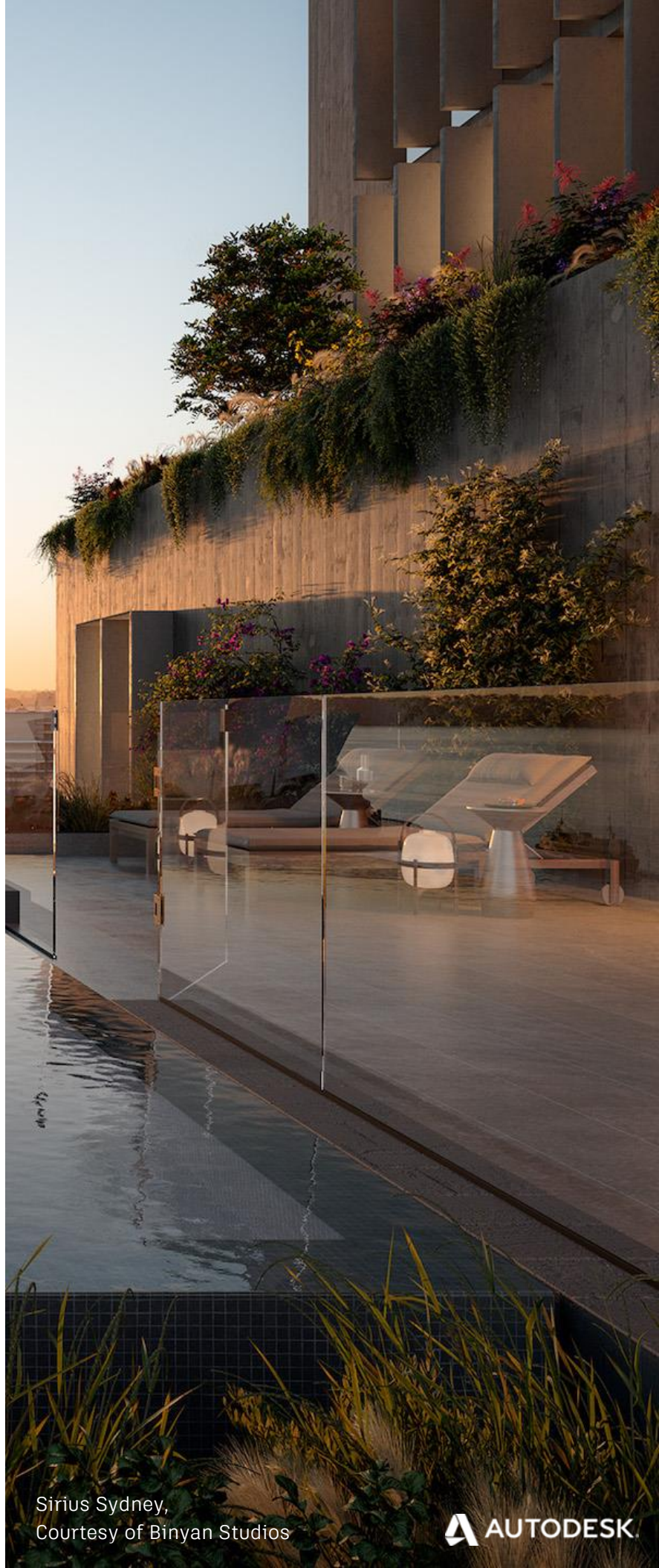
I've been using 3ds Max since the very inception, and the tool is constantly evolving to help us deliver the highest quality work for clients. We rely on 3ds Max because it's a complex tool that enables us to be granular with every minor detail. Everything is controllable; everything is possible. Whatever a client asks for, we are able to deliver. Among the many features we love are the ability to view iterations in real-time and the robust retopology tools.



3ds Max enables us to handle a diverse body of client work 

Q. HOW DOES 3DS MAX HELP YOU SOLVE DAY-TO-DAY CHALLENGES?

3ds Max is our main tool, and I can't imagine working without it. On a daily basis we are required to deliver photoreal visualizations that most people won't be able to differentiate from actual photographs. It's a very demanding and high-performance work environment, and 3ds Max enables us to handle a diverse body of client work – everything from a small bathroom to a massive masterplan on top of a mountain in Saudi Arabia. The range of control, from intimate, hand-crafted models to complex visualizations, is why we continue to rely on 3ds Max to handle our daily challenges and project workload.



Sirius Sydney,
Courtesy of Binyan Studios





Q. FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, HOW HAS THE INDUSTRY EVOLVED IN THE LAST DECADE?

Design visualization has become more sophisticated. While it used to focus solely on portraying architecture, today it's a full-fledged marketing tool used to tell stories and create experiences.

Within visualization, one of the current trends is focusing on a more artistic approach that uses photography as inspiration. The images we create are commercial art, but nevertheless, they're still masterpieces that need to follow the principles of composition, lighting hierarchy, and narrative. We've helped bring this trend to the forefront as one of the leading companies in the industry. Other visual aesthetic trends include the move towards a more minimalist color palette, in both interior design and lighting.

“**Design visualization has become more sophisticated**”

I'm always looking outside the industry for inspiration, viewing things like new product launches, art installations, and the entertainment industry to bring excitement into our work and the interactive sales gallery experience for clients. Making the client the very center of the experience and leaning into the larger brand narrative is very powerful.

