



[CG GARAGE PODCAST #257 | IVONA ALEXANDROVA](#)

[TOTAL CHAOS/THU GOLDEN TICKET WINNER](#)

Ivona's imaginative competition entry won her a trip to THU – and a place on the podcast. This bright VFX student tells Chris about her education and ambitions.

At Total Chaos 2019, we launched a competition with an amazing prize for one budding CG artist: A "Golden Ticket" to the THU conference in Malta. All the entrants had to do was impress our judges with their story, via text, imagery or video. After poring over the entries there was one clear winner: Ivona Alexandrova, whose positive outlook and artistic skill shone through her work.

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- Chris Nichols Have you heard these podcasts before?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes. I've been listening to them for forever and they're amazing. Every time I go to university or travel somewhere or even when I'm cooking, it's inspiration.
- Chris Nichols Oh, good. I'm glad. I'm glad. I'm really happy that you're here and you got to come to THU and you came to Total Chaos. It was really cool that you were able to do that. We saw your essay and we thought it was really funny, but also really sweet.
- Ivona Alexandrova Thank you.
- Chris Nichols But I think it'd be really nice for people to know, what is your origin story? Where did you start? How did you want to get into 3D? What was your things that you're doing?
- Ivona Alexandrova So it was actually, it was by chance. It was probably the happiest coincidence I've ever had. I was in high school, I suppose I was in high school, I was 13. And there was this club, newly opened, which was focused on doing 3D, it was called Virtual Archeology. It was focused on doing 3D and creating a reconstruction of gold treasure with the idea to give it to the museum for just exhibitions and to just travel around.
- Ivona Alexandrova So I heard about it by chance. It's like, oh, my god, that's so cool. Because we were too young and no one told us, it turned out as you have to be 16 or 17 to join the club because of the technical difficulties and everyone's like, "Oh, no. You're not going to make it. You're so young and green."
- Chris Nichols How old were you?
- Ivona Alexandrova I was 13.
- Chris Nichols 13. Okay. Yeah.
- Ivona Alexandrova But I was like, no, that's my thing. I should give it a try. So I had some hard times talking with the headmaster and everyone, but somehow I actually made it. And it was like, cool, okay, I'm actually going to have my first 3D lesson. It was great. It was one of those times where you're just going there and you find your own community, and you try something new for the first time, but it's just amazing, all the stars just align and you just feel like it's your thing. I was like, oh my god, that's amazing.
- Chris Nichols But yeah. So you were doing 3D modeling of a site for an archeological site, right?

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- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. I was actually doing programming and mathematics. It's my school profile and it was more science and a technology based. So this is what I call my free time passion.
- Chris Nichols And so what were you learning at the time? what programs were you learning to do at this time?
- Ivona Alexandrova Oh, we're using 3D Max, so it was even an old release.
- Chris Nichols Right, right. Okay. So that was your first taste into the 3D world right, into CG in some ways. Did you continue doing that after that or were you-
- Ivona Alexandrova Actually, it turned out that most of the people found it too hard and decided to drop, and the club just stopped existing in a few months.
- Chris Nichols Oh, that's too bad.
- Ivona Alexandrova And because it was only me and I think two other guys who are those keep on going and there was no point, people were not interested. So I just kept on going downstairs just talking to the teachers and basically spending all my time in this tiny room on the first floor and just watching tutorials, asking for some advice and some mentorships. So I just kept on doing it myself.
- Chris Nichols Right. So you got introduced to the room because of the club and then the club disbanded and then you stayed in the room, right?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. It was just to go there any time and just break my laptop and keep on digging.
- Chris Nichols Yeah. That's awesome. That's awesome. Well, that's a good way to go. That's a good thing to introduce. I don't think you probably didn't know much about 3D back then, right?
- Ivona Alexandrova No, not at all. Especially in Bulgaria, it was a teacher who was teaching physics and science. He just knew some stuff about 3D, he was just sharing his experience, he was not even a professional 3D artist, but it was just enough to give you the first push and everything.
- Chris Nichols Yeah. Okay. So how long were you just sitting in the lab? You would just go there on your free time?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah, basically. Every few days. I don't want to annoy the teachers.

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- Chris Nichols Right. Okay. So how did it go from there? How did you continue to get into the 3D or were you swayed away or back and forth? I remember you said something about your parents having a hard time understanding that.
- Ivona Alexandrova It was hard because I was doing mathematics and science and I was going to contests and I won a few first prizes and I was just good with maths and 3D at the time, it was not quite mainstream thing to do in Bulgaria. And I was very passionate about, but everyone was like, "Find a real job."
- Chris Nichols Find a real job? Okay.
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. It's this mindset that you have to be doing programming or science because it's just prestigious. So I thought I was good at maths, I should go into programming. I was doing quite competitive programming. It was great, I was doing a lot of classes out of school, but it was just not my thing. I just didn't feel this sense of being complete, and I was also drawing and painting on the side.
- Ivona Alexandrova So I was basically doing programming and in the breaks I just kept on drawing. I was like, okay, this is actually something I'm really interested in, doing creative things. And I reached a point where I had to made a choice and either dig into programming or go into the creative field. And because all my life I was doing science, I was like, I actually want to try something else. And I decided to go for a creative degree in animation.
- Chris Nichols Okay. So you went for a degree in animation?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes.
- Chris Nichols Okay.
- Ivona Alexandrova And because it is not something which is quite developed in Bulgaria. I just wanted to get a good education and I meet like minded people because there was no one else around me who was doing this and I thought, well I should go to the UK. So I did.

Moving to the UK

- Chris Nichols So you packed up your stuff, you went the UK?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. Basically, I packed my suitcases. I started my degree in Plymouth and just took my chance and went there.
- Chris Nichols Okay, so how long have you been in the UK now?
- Ivona Alexandrova Two and a half years.
- Chris Nichols Okay. Okay. And what are you doing in the UK now?
- Ivona Alexandrova I switched my university because I'm still doing the same course, but I just switched my university, and I'm currently in Manchester, finishing my degree and hoping to go to the industry.
- Chris Nichols Okay. All right. Well, let's talk a little bit about THU and about your experience here so far. This is the final day of THU. Tell us a little bit about how you got here and everything else. How did that work out for you?
- Ivona Alexandrova Oh, it was actually amazing. I was traveling from the UK and even from Frankfurt airport, I just started seeing people wearing THU hoodies, and because I was traveling by myself, I didn't have a group. I just saw people coming to the airport wearing THU hoodies, it's like, oh my god. Those are people who are going to Malta. So straight from the airport when you start meeting people, just start talking in few minutes time, you're actually introduced to almost everyone who is queuing on the gate.
- Ivona Alexandrova And everyone's so friendly, they're so happy to see you, so happy to talk to you. It was just amazing, even before I actually arrived in Malta, I already knew quite a few people. So even my flight was such a good experience. And then we arrived here, took my bath, and met people who are just casually roaming around. And everyone's so friendly, just so welcoming and for some of us who are by themselves, it's just great.
- Chris Nichols Good. Yeah, it is. It is really good. It was interesting. But actually, I want to go back. When you were at Total Chaos, which was early in May, what inspired you to write that thing? What got you to want to come here?
- Ivona Alexandrova Oh, actually, I was about to go to a talk, but then I saw that there was a panel about THU, and I was like, okay, it should be interesting. I've seen quite a lot of people posting content from THU and I was like, wow, this

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looks amazing. And I went to the open panel and you were talking about THU, sharing all the stories and what happened. It's like, oh my god, this is the place to be. Sometimes you just sit there and you're like, yeah, that's my thing. You just feel it, and that's it.

Chris Nichols Okay. All right, so you arrived here and I want to know a little bit about what'd you think about the event in terms of the talks? Which talks did you go to?

Ivona Alexandrova Oh, I went to such a great variety of talks. I was trying to go to basically every one. I really enjoyed the technical stuff and all the workshops, because it's just my thing. But I also like the talks when the mentors were just sharing their stories. It was so inspiring. You get to see that there are people like you, they still have their own self doubts, their own insecurities. I was like, oh my god, those are vulnerable supervisors, and they're talking about normal stuff they do every day.

Ivona Alexandrova I'm like, wow, this is actually like everyone else. You realize that everyone shares the same struggles and everything. When they share their stories, especially when you're a student and when you are about to just start out, it's so inspiring.

Chris Nichols Yes. Yeah. It's nice to hear about doubt a little bit, because I think everyone has it. And then when you realize that everyone has it, then you don't feel so bad about that.

Ivona Alexandrova And even when I moved to the UK, there were not a lot of people who were into 3D, and I still didn't have this community around me and people who were supporting me. It's like, when you're on your own, you still have your own self doubt when there is no one actually mentor you or teach you, it's like is getting worse and worse. And when you meet those people and you're like, oh my god, they're all me. You realize that it's normal and there's nothing you have to be ashamed of.

Chris Nichols Sure. No. There's nothing you have to be ashamed of. I thought it was really cool. It was interesting, I did a podcast yesterday with Peter Ramsey and he and I talked about imposter syndrome, when you feel like even though you've succeeded in a lot of ways, like he has, he still feels like, do I deserve this? Even when he even got his Oscar, he was like, does this really happen? Do I deserve this? And so I think that's really a great humble thing to do, because if you keep that mentality throughout your success, and I'm sure you're still starting your career in a lot of ways, but if you keep that humbleness throughout it, you will be able to succeed even more.

Ivona Alexandrova And even when I won the golden ticket, I was like, is this really happening? I went to Total Chaos and I was surrounded by extremely talented people,

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everyone's amazing in what they're doing. I was like, is this really happening to me? Do I really deserve this? It was a big thing for me, and I was still like, wow, do I actually deserve this? Am I good enough to get this for me?

Chris Nichols Well, the thing I think about, the way we set up the competition was specifically to find someone that would really get into it and really appreciate all the things that are there and really absorb it, right? So if you come in and you're young and eager and you have a passion. And you wrote something really nice and cool in your essay. And I think one of the... it was Joy and Lynette really loved your picture...

Ivona Alexandrova Thank you.

Chris Nichols ... that you submitted, which was really fun and creative. So it's really cool to do that. It's really cool to do that. And so I think coming to THU is a big deal because you get to see all these people, like you said, and you got to see some really great people at Total Chaos as well. But what is it that you want to do?

Ivona's ambitions

Ivona Alexandrova I really want to go into 3D, but because I was doing a lot of traditional art and I was doing programming as well, I want to combine my both passions and go into technical art director and basically use my creativity, but also develop my programming. And actually, I believe that magic happens when art, technology and science combine.

Chris Nichols Did you see Sally Slade's talk yesterday?

Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I did.

Chris Nichols Yeah. You want to be another Sally Slade.

Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. Oh well, one day.

Chris Nichols Yeah. Sally and I are good friends. Did you talk to her?

Ivona Alexandrova I couldn't find her around but she is on my list.

Chris Nichols She is a force to be reckoned with and she too has doubts like anyone else. Yeah. Even though her talk was amazing yesterday and I love her

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style, you should go back. I recorded an episode with her a few years back, so you should listen to that podcast, it tells her history. It's not dissimilar from your version in a lot of ways. So I think it's really, really cool.

- Ivona Alexandrova Everyone here has different story to tell. It's just amazing, because I have listened to a lot of podcasts, but a lot of times people are like, "Oh yeah, I've been doing this since the age of 16 and I just kept them doing this." Okay, that's great, but at some point you're like, "Okay, I've tried so many things." But then there are people who actually made up their minds at early age, apparently they're more technically prepared. You're, okay I like so much things.
- Chris Nichols That doesn't mean anything.
- Ivona Alexandrova When you're coming here and everyone's so diverse and they share their own stories, and it's like, wow, this is actually amazing.
- Chris Nichols Yeah. But I've known people who started when they were 30 or 40, so it's not uncommon. As long as you have something and it's that drives you, you can learn the stuff pretty quickly in a couple years.
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. As long as you can find the right mindset and you actually believe in yourself, it's like, everything's possible.
- Chris Nichols Okay. So you said you wanted to be a technical artist, right? You want to do that. In what? Do you want to do films, commercials, TV?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes. I really like VFX and photo realism. So this is one of my dreams jobs.
- Chris Nichols Okay. Well, what are some of your favorite films that inspire you?
- Ivona Alexandrova First time I watched the Lord of the Rings was when I was in school, and I think it was the first time I actually started getting into CG. It's like, wow, this is amazing. It's like magic on this screen and now, every time I was this pill, I'm like, oh my god, I want to do this.
- Chris Nichols Really?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. I keep on watching every year when I feel down or something like this so I can remind myself why am I doing this. Especially when you're burned out or there are times when you lose your motivation and everything. When you just watch something, you're like, okay. Yeah. It will be worth it.
- Chris Nichols Okay. That's a good idea. Go back to seeing the things that inspired you at the beginning.

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- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, exactly. Or if you go to an event and you just take pictures with people and you're like, okay, yeah, I could have talked with him, or I could have shared this, this, this. Like, oh, come on, don't give up.
- Chris Nichols Right. Yeah. You shouldn't. That's really cool. I think it's good to go back and look back at things and say, "This is one of the things that inspired me. There's are some of the things I want to do." And in the UK, there's a lot of VFX companies, so you should be in good shape. You should be in good shape. Well, cool. You said, how much longer do you have for your degree?
- Ivona Alexandrova I finished in May. So it's one year to go.
- Chris Nichols One year to go, okay.
- Ivona Alexandrova And I'm looking forward to, with all the feedback I got came to practice and yes, so these people next year saw my progress.
- Chris Nichols Have you brought some of your work with you and showing people here?
- Ivona Alexandrova Oh yeah, I did. On the first day, I was like, oh my god, everyone here, they're so talented and I was a bit like, had my own self-doubts. I was like, oh my god, I don't feel like showing my work. But I was like, oh, come on, you can do this. And actually, also talking to some of the Total supervisors. They're like, "Wow, yeah, this is quite a good thing." And I actually had such a good feedback, I had quite positive feedback. I was like, oh my god, I can actually do something.
- Chris Nichols Yeah. And have you gone to some of the recruiting stuff too?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I did. It was better than expected. It was amazing.
- Chris Nichols Who did you talk with?
- Ivona Alexandrova I was trying to talk to almost all the studios when they had the gaps in between and I had some pre-booked interviews, so I was basically trying to reach out to everyone. It was amazing.
- Chris Nichols Good, good, good. Because I know a lot of people who've actually gotten some really amazing jobs having come to THU. I know Victor and Pedro, they both ended up going to Disney, which is a really amazing thing for them. But it's cool that you're able to see some of that and see how this works. And did you do any of the mentorship sessions as well?

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- Ivona Alexandrova Oh, yes. There were probably my most favorite part. It was just amazing. You just sit with all those people you've known for years and you admire their work and they just sit and chat with you. They're so friendly.
- Chris Nichols Who did you talk to?
- Ivona Alexandrova I went to a Peter Ramsey mentorship yesterday.
- Chris Nichols Nice.
- Ivona Alexandrova I had such an amazing sessions with Kevin Bailey, sorry for mispronunciation. He was more than friendly, it was probably one of my highlights in here. And I was basically trying to reach to all the mentors, basically going around and joining the tiny circles and that. It was so welcoming and friendly and all this behind the scenes advice, it was just so inspiring.
- Chris Nichols Well, I think it's wonderful that you're a young lady from Bulgaria and you're trying to do something you don't know, and you get to sit around in a circle and talk to Oscar winners and get advice from them about your career. Tell us some of the things that they told you about advice.

Advice from THU Knights

- Ivona Alexandrova What to tell? Just I should make up my mind. Also, I was asking the way they actually started because it's usually the first job that is like the hardest to reach. And some people were like, "Oh, yeah. It was actually by chance. I reached to someone or I met someone via a conference or LinkedIn." I was like, oh my god, this is actually what I'm trying to do. This is amazing. Or people gave me a straightforward guide to how should I prepare my portfolio. They just gave me their point of view, showed me what are they searching for and what kind of mistakes do they see when they watch a story or something.
- Ivona Alexandrova I was like, oh yeah, I see some of those mistakes. And now when I go back to my work, it's like, oh my god, okay I have one year to go, so fine, I just redo everything. It was such constructive feedback, like tiny little details that I didn't even realize were there.
- Chris Nichols Give me an example.

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- Ivona Alexandrova Well, I was modeling a little design and the stairs were just a little bit too small, and I just didn't realize it was there. It's not even that obvious, but I learned that this is what really makes the difference between a good portfolio and outstanding work. And just tiny little details like ambient occlusion or a tiny reflection, it is not even that obvious, but actually makes a lot of difference when you're just testing things from different perspective. It was just so useful to actually learn what makes a good portfolio and what makes an outstanding work.
- Chris Nichols Right. I think it's good to get that feedback. Did you feel inspired, and then it was like, now I'm go and fix my portfolio and do-
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah, I've already made a do-to list, like what should I redo, what should I rerender? I just have bullet points in my organizer. It's like oh my god, I can't wait.
- Chris Nichols Oh, okay. That's great. That's great. I think it's really important to see that perspective, and they're absolutely right. Getting your first job, you can have all the talent and that's always going to be very important, to have that talent. But that's not necessarily going to be the... A lot of it is luck and timing. And so another pretty good piece of advice that I would say is, and it's something that Peter said himself in his talk. He says, if you go in and you're rejected, or they say, "No, sorry, we don't have a job for you." That doesn't mean you can't try again later.
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah, exactly.
- Chris Nichols A lot of it has to be like, oh, no, we know we need this person now, and so you just have to be there at the right time to do that and to get to know these people.
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, exactly. You just need to find your perfect suit for the job. It doesn't mean that you're not talented. Because a lot of people just got rejected and they feel like they're not good enough or something like this, but it's just they're not the perfect fit and it's perfectly fine, and that's what I got out of here. It's fine not to get it. It's going to work out at some point, just keep on going.
- Chris Nichols Yeah, absolutely. I think it's really good that you're able to see some of those things and to experience that.
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes. It was amazing. It was what I call an eye opening...

Making friends at THU

- Chris Nichols Yeah. Awesome. Awesome. Well, I think there's so many good things to learn from the people here. Have you started making a lot of friends at this point too, and connecting with people?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah, I'll feel so sad tomorrow. I got too used to being around good people and I just can't wait to go somewhere to meet them. Or it's a good excuse, just travel somewhere and organize meetup or something. I can't wait to see those people again and hopefully organize a meetup or something like this.
- Chris Nichols Well, you're in the UK, so there's a lot of people in the UK that are THU people. So when a lot of things happen is that people that know each other from THU, they get together and have informal THU meetups in the UK or whatever.
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah, especially, I've seen all of our Facebook groups and small communities. I was like, oh my god, it's amazing.
- Chris Nichols Good. Good. Well, I think it's really important that you know that, that you're able to be part of that community and to learn about it. If someone were to come to an event like this, right, what would you tell them, what's the best thing for them to be prepared to come for? Is there anything you wish you had been more prepared to do?
- Ivona Alexandrova The first thing that I believe that it's not as essential. I had some things that were not completely finished. I was like, oh, I shouldn't show this. It's good to even ask for feedback for work in progress. Like what everyone keeps on telling me, it's like, "You don't have to be perfect all the time. You're working in a team, you are in a pipeline. You don't have to do everything by yourself, because when you work on a production you're never by yourself."
- Ivona Alexandrova And not to be afraid to show your ideas and work in progress because you're going to do this on a daily basis. And try to socialize as much as possible, try to meet everyone and talk to people and yeah, basically, I don't know the other thing.
- Chris Nichols Okay. It's okay. Now, do you still like math? Do you still like doing that stuff?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I do.

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- Chris Nichols You do? Do you program still as well?
- Ivona Alexandrova There is a game dev society in another university in Manchester and I joined it and I'm still working with people from the computer science department, and I'm trying to get some knowledge out of their experience and we are doing workshops for game dev, basically workshops for students. And I've been trying to bring some creativity in the computer science department.
- Chris Nichols Really?
- Ivona Alexandrova But as all of them are programmers, I'm trying to get something out from their experience. So yes, I'm trying to keep on refreshing my skills.
- Chris Nichols Are you interested in games?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I am. We run our game dev society and we organize workshops, game camps and basically doing all stuff for the game dev community in Manchester.
- Chris Nichols That's awesome. It sounds like you're really bonding with communities, finding little niche communities and-
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. It's because when I was in high school, I didn't have my CG community or people who shared the same interest as me. Every time I'd meet like minded people, it's like, oh my god, yeah, this is my fit. That's why, because when you don't have people that are like minded to you, sometimes you feel like an outcast or when you don't feel like you don't have a sense of belonging. But when I go to a community and you feel that you finally fit in somewhere, it's just amazing to be part of it.
- Chris Nichols Right. So you did feel for a long time that you were a bit of an outcast in some ways?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I did.
- Chris Nichols Yeah. All right. And obviously, there's going to be different things. Can you tell me, if you were to sum up the difference, because I think Total Chaos was actually pretty good for you too, in a lot of ways-
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. It was amazing.
- Chris Nichols Right. Can you tell, what are some of the things you got out of that conference as well?

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- Ivona Alexandrova Because Total Chaos was divided into three different sectors, art and craft, programming, and I felt like I was genuinely interested in all of them and I was trying to combine art talks with programming. And I was at the technical stuff, although I didn't know all the in-depth material. I was like, this is actually so interesting. And it was great, I found out that I can actually merge both of them and so basically go to all the different categories and feel like I get to fit in there.
- Ivona Alexandrova So it was amazing that it had such a great variety from art and technical stuff, and you get to meet all those diverse people. It's not strictly for artists only or let's say, programmers. And I think those two should definitely just collaborate, because...
- Chris Nichols Right. Well that's part of my job, is to try to combine those two things. But okay, so I just want to dig deeper. What are some of the things that you liked about the technical talks? What were some of the technical talks at Total Chaos that you sort of-
- Ivona Alexandrova I did one of talks about artificial intelligence and the way it's integrated and especially in 3D and the way that it is going to help artists. And I was really interested because a lot of people think, oh my god, AI's going to take our jobs, but instead, it's going to be such a great tool you can use to optimize the workflow and actually work faster and more efficient, and it actually gives you much more time for creative decisions and tweaking and experimentation, instead of just spending long hours doing the same thing over and over again.
- Ivona Alexandrova I was quite impressed how optimized everything can be, but actually give you a lot of creative freedom in the same time, and it's amazing to integrate those new technologies into your pipeline and I'm just looking forward to see what's going to happen next.
- Chris Nichols Did you see Scott Eaton's talk?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I did.
- Chris Nichols Because I think to me, it's like it shows you can be way more creative.
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah, exactly. I was like, oh my god, it's mind blowing. Especially Scott. We've been studying him on some of our lectures in university. I was like, oh my god, I know him from my studies. He's actually here. He's talking to us. And then you go out and you actually meet him.
- Chris Nichols Did you get a chance to talk to him?

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- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I did. I even met him at Total Chaos, and I was like, oh my god, I've never seen him before. It's amazing.
- Chris Nichols That's cool. Okay, so AI. AI is something you think is very important, right?
- Ivona Alexandrova Yeah. It's definitely going to be the future, but I feel although a lot of people are reserved and have a negative... I think it's going to optimize so much the workflow and it will give you so many opportunities and to create stuff and to be so efficient in your day job, so it will be amazing.
- Chris Nichols Yeah. I think that AI is going to be very interesting and I think that we're going to rely on youthful enthusiasm to make sure that we know where it can be used for a lot of really good things. I think that especially the creative side of things, it's going to be really cool to optimize that kind of stuff.
- Chris Nichols Okay. So that's something you're interested in, but when you're doing your 3D work as well, what's your favorite part? Because there's modeling, texturing, animating, whatever. What's your favorite thing that you do? You said photo realism was one thing you're into.
- Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I really love modeling. This is probably my most favorite area, but I was also doing technical directing in my first year in university as side lectures in uni. And it was great to learn how to do some scripting in Maya and actually use them to integrate them in your workflow, and to be more efficient and write your tiny scripts and use them instead of clicking a thousand times, doing the same thing over and over again. So I really want to dig into Houdini and use it for modeling, but doing it procedurally, so that I have a greater control and optimize my workflow. And I think it's just such a powerful tool.
- Chris Nichols And you take Houdini classes at your university?
- Ivona Alexandrova Unfortunately, I don't have it on my course. I'd be more than happy if my tutors allow me to attend some of the computer animation classes when they do have it. So please, let me in.
- Chris Nichols Right. Well, cool.
- Ivona Alexandrova But yeah, I'm trying to watch a lot of classes online, and even every software company, they have their courses and it's basically, if you just try to seek out and search for information, everything is basically right in front of you.
- Chris Nichols Right. That's awesome. Well, I think that's really cool. It's interesting that you're really gravitating towards scripting. I think that that sounds like it's

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something that's going to be your thing. You would like to make the tools that make the art, it sounds like. Yeah?

Ivona Alexandrova Yes.

Advice for a 13-year-old

Chris Nichols That's pretty cool. All right, well listen, I just want to thank you for doing this and being able to share your experiences and to tell us everything. If you were to talk to your 13 year old self again now, what would you tell that young girl?

Ivona Alexandrova Oh my god, so many things. There'll be a lot of struggles. You're never going to be prepared for everything that ever happens to you. And just keep on going, moving forward and never stop doing this. And at first, I would say just for your passion, but actually doing a lot of side things like traditional art and doing programming, now I feel like everything led me towards this, so I wouldn't do a lot of things differently because it was a lot of struggle, but now I realize that everything has its own purpose and it's exactly what led me to the place I am currently at. So I would just say just keep on going.

Chris Nichols Right. Yeah. I always look at it and I think about things that have happened to me in my life that were not good or bad and I was like, well if that never had happened I wouldn't be where I am now. Right?

Ivona Alexandrova Yes, exactly. There was so much struggle, for example, this summer I was applying for an intern, but unfortunately I didn't get it. But because of this I was able to go to Total Chaos. And because I went there, I met so many people from THU, and that's why I'm here now. I wouldn't do it differently. I was quite sad at the first place, but now I'm on cloud nine. It's amazing. Everything has its purpose, but you just don't see it straight away.

Chris Nichols Right. Yeah. Well, that's true. That's true. All right. Well, we are going to have an amazing last day at THU. I'm very excited about it and hopefully, I'll be back next year. Hopefully you'll be back next year.

Ivona Alexandrova Yes, definitely.

Chris Nichols Yeah. Yeah. And hopefully, come to Total Chaos too. I think 2020 Total Chaos is going to be amazing. Did you meet Melissa yesterday? Yes, you did.

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Ivona Alexandrova Yes, I did.

Chris Nichols Yeah. So she's actually going back to Sophia and they're doing a lot of prep for Total Chaos, so it will be a real good thing.

Ivona Alexandrova Oh, that's amazing. And I've already told my classmates about it, and everyone was like, "Oh my god, that's amazing. We should go to Bulgaria." And we have our British gang going to Total Chaos next year, so-

Chris Nichols Really? Awesome.

Ivona Alexandrova Yeah.

Chris Nichols Yeah? How many people are coming?

Ivona Alexandrova I think about 10-ish.

Chris Nichols Oh, that's good.

Ivona Alexandrova We already agreed to going there. So yeah, we're going to organize a CG trip to Bulgaria.

Chris Nichols That's so cool. That's awesome. Well, I'm so glad you're able to do that and to come to both these events and be part of the community. I know that the guys in Bulgaria were very excited that you had won the ticket, obviously because of your Bulgarian roots, and I think it's really cool that you're a woman, you're a Bulgarian, you are a programmer, you are an artist. You have everything going for you right now.

Ivona Alexandrova Oh, thank you.

Chris Nichols And I think that that's really cool. I really want to make sure you meet Sally because I think she's going to be your sensei. It'll be really great. So I will make sure to find her and let her know to find you.

Ivona Alexandrova Oh, thank you.

Chris Nichols Yeah. So I'll message you at some point with like, Sally, you need to meet Ivona. So that would be great.

Ivona Alexandrova Oh, that's amazing. It's more than appreciated.

Chris Nichols Yeah, she's great. She's really cool. All right, well thanks so much for doing this. I really appreciate it.

Ivona Alexandrova Thank you for this. It was a dream come true.

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Chris Nichols Yeah. Well, let's go out and do the Polaroid, and then you can be... I'll put you up on the wall with all the other people and you'll be right there. It'll be great. Thank you.

Ivona Alexandrova Thank you.