

# Ashley Ruhl

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[ashleyruhl.com](http://ashleyruhl.com)

## Narrative Direction • Cinematic Direction • Writing

For over 13 years, I've been an integral part of many memorable cinematic moments in award-winning narrative-focused games. I've been a designer, writer and director of story content for many different styles of projects, including Star Wars: The Old Republic, Tales From the Borderlands, Remnant: From the Ashes, Darksiders 3, The Walking Dead, The Wolf Among Us, and more. I always strive to build emotionally evocative narratives that empower the player to be the author of their own story. I'm also a seasoned lead, director, and manager, with experience as the creative vision-holder, the guide towards stronger development processes, and the emotionally supportive people manager, frequently all at the same time. I value my relationship with my team as highly as the quality of our games.

### Experience

BioWare Austin, Broadsword Online Games ————— March 2020 – Present

#### Narrative Director

- Leading team as Narrative Director, overseeing all narrative and cinematics for ongoing game updates of Star Wars: The Old Republic.
- Spearheaded new narrative feature called Date Night, a repeatable cinematic narrative experience for players who engage with romance content in SWTOR.
- Defining game design goals and roadmap of the live service game experience alongside the Level Design Director, Gameplay Director, UI/UX Director, and Lead Producer.
- Maintaining narrative roadmap for the project several years out.
- Setting narrative goals and scope for each content release.
- Collaborating with Lead Writer on new narrative content, including story structure, scene outlines, characters, and gameplay integration.
- Reviewing dialogue writing, with focuses on narrative structure, player roleplay opportunities, and cohesive integration with the gameplay experience.
- Communicating narrative direction and goals to external partners.
- Providing feedback on additional writing such as codex entries, in-game messaging, player messaging, and live stream scripts.
- Providing narrative direction and feedback on new key art for the game.
- Attending voice recording sessions, providing narrative context and performance feedback.
- Providing feedback in cinematic reviews, with an eye on both the larger narrative experience and cinematic execution.
- Creating promotional story trailers for each update to engage the player base.

- Representing the narrative of SWTOR on Twitch livestreams alongside the Lead Writer and several members of the team.

## **Lead Cinematic Designer**

- Created cinematic style guide for SWTOR, balancing the tools' capabilities and established Star Wars visual storytelling.
- Guided SWTOR visual style through character-driven storytelling.
- Translated the Creative Director's intent to an actionable plan for the cinematic team.
- Created estimates for cinematic work as well as identifying all pipeline dependencies (sfx, vfx, art, etc).
- Led cinematic team reviews and gave constructive feedback based on goals of the story.
- Worked closely with gameplay and art to deliver cinematic content within scope.
- Created on-boarding for new cinematic hires, including training courses and practice work to adapt to a unique tool set.
- Invested in team growth through frequent work reviews and group learning sessions.
- Maintained internal wiki on cinematic and narrative tools.

Website: <https://www.swtor.com>

Gunfire Games ————— Feb 2018 – March 2020

## **Narrative Designer [Darksiders 3, Remnant: From the Ashes]**

- Narrative design for Remnant: From the Ashes, writing and implementing dialogue, refining Sequencer functionality, scripting in Blueprint in Unreal
- Design for Darksiders 3, including cinematics implementation and dialogue system tracking
- Working with engineers to create new narrative pipelines and content tracking
- Contributing to trailers and promotional content

Website: <https://darksiders.com/>, <https://www.remnantgame.com/>

Telltale Games ————— Sep 2013 – Dec 2015, Feb 2017 – Feb 2018

## **Cinematic Director**

- Refined player interaction and motivation with narrative choices
- Gave one-on-one feedback to cinematic designers
- Guided design, environment, animation, and writing departments towards one creative vision
- Found compromising solutions for maintaining quality under frequently tight deadlines
- Credits
  - Tales From the Borderlands: Episode 1 (Assistant Director)
  - Tales From the Borderlands: Episode 3 (Director)

Telltale Games (cont.)

## **Cinematic Designer**

- Created scene layout and pacing for transitions between player control and cinematic presentation, including branching content, object interactions, and fail states
- Crafted the staging, cameras and interaction experience of complete levels
- Iterated in fast paced environment, often being assigned multiple levels in each episode
- Credits:
  - Walking Dead: Season 2
  - Wolf Among Us
  - Game of Thrones
  - Tales From the Borderlands
  - Minecraft Story Mode
  - Walking Dead: A New Frontier
  - Guardians of the Galaxy
  - Batman: Enemy Within

Website: [www.telltalegames.com](http://www.telltalegames.com)

Bioware Austin \_\_\_\_\_ Feb 2011 – Feb 2012, Feb 2016 – Feb 2017

## **Cinematic Designer [Star Wars: The Old Republic]**

- Created in-game cinematics using proprietary toolset, including branching content
- Collaborated with design department to create scenes that complemented gameplay

Website: [www.swtor.com](http://www.swtor.com)

Trion Worlds \_\_\_\_\_ Mar 2012 – July 2013

## **Cinematic Designer [Defiance]**

- Created ¼ of the game's cinematic content using proprietary toolset, from blocking to polish
- Collaborated with design department to create scenes that complemented gameplay
- Contributed to the game's trailers and promotional video content

Website: [www.defiance.com](http://www.defiance.com)

## Education

Bachelor of Arts (BA), Animation  
DePaul University  
Chicago, IL (2010)

## Accolades and Affiliations

Forbes.com 2016

### **Forbes '30 Under 30' List in Games**

Independent Games Festival 2010

Devil's Tuning Fork (Co-Developer, Artist), **Student Showcase Winner**

## Recommendations

“I worked with Ashley for several years at Telltale Games and was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to experience her talent, enthusiasm and work ethic in multiple capacities. As the head of the cinematics department, I watched her quickly rise through the ranks from rockstar cinematic artist, to cinematic lead and eventually episode director, proving herself to be one of the best hires we ever made. She is an excellent communicator and can easily convey ideas to artists from every department in the pipeline, all the way up to the production and executive levels. She is also extremely honest and straight-forward with her team, earning their trust as a teammate and their respect as a mentor, due to her immense talent and complete willingness to share her gift to help others grow. Ashley is a natural leader and a valuable addition to every team who is lucky enough to work with her. “

**-Dennis Lenart, Creative Director, Telltale Games**

“As part of my narrative and cinematic design team, Ashley proved to be one of my most trusted designers. She has an extremely intuitive knack for storytelling and consistently produced high-quality scenes for our game, Star Wars: The Old Republic, which were frequently called out by both our development team and player community. Ashley handled a wide variety of story content across the game -- ranging from VFX-driven spectacles to dark, intimate moments between characters. This breadth of talent as well as her ability to zero in on core moments identified her in our studio as a creative who cared deeply for how narrative is experienced as well as how efficiently it could be produced.”

**-Paul Marino, Lead Narrative Designer, BioWare Austin**