

Wayne Robson's 'BlendWiz' Autodesk Mudbox 2014 plug-in

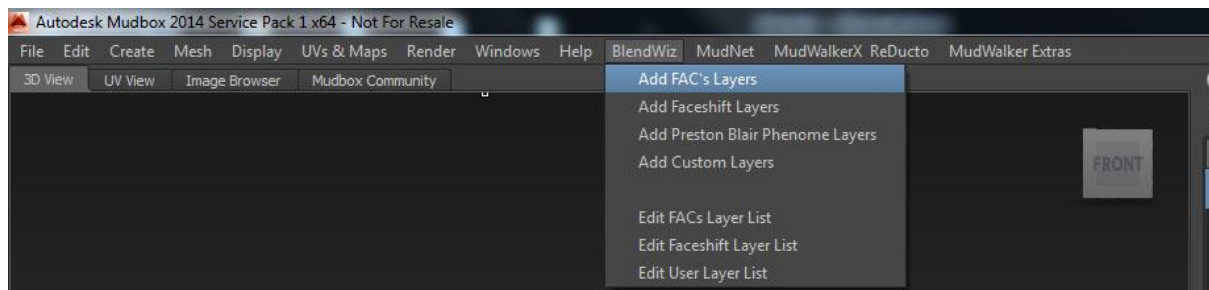
How to install

When you unzip the 'BlendZip.zip' file you will end up with three things. This PDF, a folder with the name 'MudboxTemp' that contains 4 text files and the plug-in itself 'BlendWiz.mp'.

Installation is a simple two step process:

1. Copy the entire MudboxTemp folder onto you main C: drive (thus meaning this folder is then *C:\MudboxTemp*). If you have MudWalker X installed this will already exist.
2. Copy the BlendWiz.mp' file to you Mudbox plug-in path. This can be found in a standard default install at the location: *C:\Program Files\Autodesk\Mudbox 2014\plugins*.

Start up Mudbox 2014 and you will see a menu item called 'BlendWiz',



You have by default 3 preset Layer sets, one for FaceShift motion capture blendshapes, One for Preston Blair Phenome Blendshape sets and one that has layer names for a full FACs blendshape set.

As well as these you also have a 'Custom' Layer that you can fill with any layer names you wish should your requirements fall outside of the other 3 main presets.

Editing Layer Creation Presets.

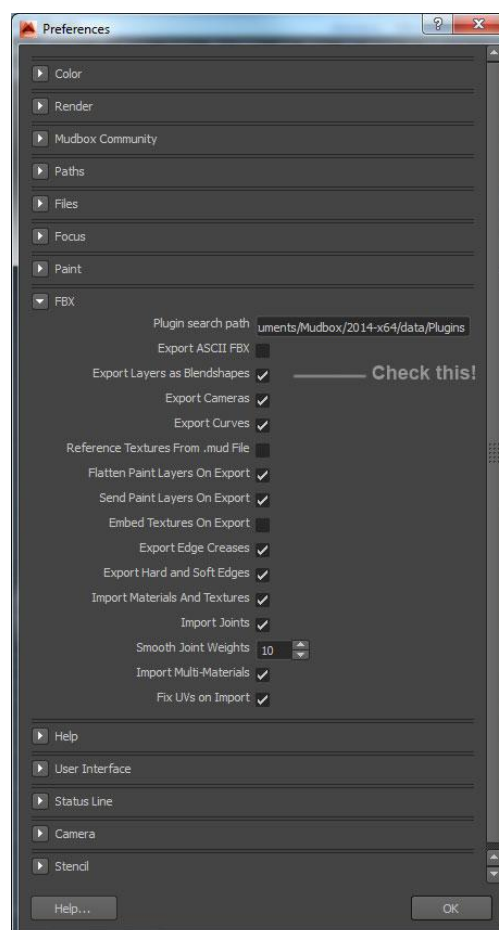
There are two ways to edit the preset files that contain the layer names, firstly from inside of the BlendWiz menu, and secondly by hand using your favourite text editor direct from their location in the *C:\MudboxTemp* folder.

Each preset text file contains one layer for each line of the text file. So in this way you can change, reorder, edit, add or remove items as you need. Even when in the main preset files themselves. It is recommended however that you keep a copy of the original version should you ever need to roll back to them.

These presets can also be changed while Mudbox is running and be then used without a restart. So you can change the layer names on the fly.

Making use of Exported Blendshapes

Mudbox contains a feature that many overlook, it can export all layers along with your model and its texture and these will show up as blendshapes / morph targets in your host app. To set mudbox to do this simply open your preferences and go to the FBX section. Make sure that 'Export Layers as Blendshapes' check box is ticked as shown in the following image.



You are now ready to go and every time you export an FBX for as long as this check box is ticked it will also include the Layers as blendshapes automatically. When combined with MudWalkerX this means you can send to any supported application in a single click, and if using the New 'MudNet' feature, to any machine anywhere in the world that you wish to send you files to...in a single click.

To use BlendWiz

1. Select the mesh you wish to create the layers for using either the object list, your object selection brush or if there is only a single model in your scene Control and A. Making sure first that you mesh is at the required subdivision level.
2. Then simply click on the blendshapes layer preset that you require and less than a second later your layers will be automatically created ready for use.
3. It is recommended to save before you do this as there is no undo function available once BlendWiz has created the layers. Any created layers from BlendWiz must then be deleted manually.
4. From this point you are free to sculpt your blend shapes however you wish.

Wayne's Fun Tip:

One interesting side effect is that you can also make layers have exactly the same name, something that can be problematic when using the Mudbox UI manually. To test this paste the following into your user file :)

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BATMAN!!!!

Once you then use the custom preset you have 18 layers with an identical name. I'm not sure why anyone would need this, but it's still there should you find a unique reason why you need to.

Wayne's extra comments

BlendWiz is a very simple idea both to use and to be frank to program, but a one that can save you a couple of hours of manually creating layers for you blendshapes. It also means that if everyone on a team is using the same preset files, all layer names will be constant throughout the pipeline and help to avoid naming issues at any point.

If you are a 3d max user the script linked below will do the simple (but time consuming if done manually) job of stripping the added text 'shape' from the end of every Blendshape layer on import to max. This is a 3Ds max / FBX issue, NOT a BlendWiz one. Feel free to open the Maxscript up and adapt it for Maya or Softimage. This is only important if you intend on transferring animation data between Blendshape setups in your host app, otherwise it is a non issue.