

## **From Zug to Los Angeles – breathing life into the dream**

24-year-old Maarten Lemmens has been a computer animator at DreamWorks Animation in Los Angeles for a year.

24-year-old Maarten Lemmens has always loved to draw. During his high school years at the International School of Zug and Lucerne, he intensified this passion and realized that he wanted to do this professionally in the future.

At just 18 he left his family in Switzerland to study in Florida. Just five years later, the Zug native works at DreamWorks Animation and thus fulfills a big dream.

### **Grew up drawing**

Maarten Lemmens spent his early years in Belgium. He remembers that he was already drawing a lot and always wanted to get better. He entered local drawing competitions where he drew birds. When the Belgian was eleven, his family moved to Zug. The young Lemmens attended the International School of Zug and Lucerne and was active in the football club in his free time.

During his time at high school, the Zuger had his own YouTube channel , where he drew animations for big YouTubers like DanTDM or Syndicate. In his final year of high school, Lemmens realized he wanted to pursue a career as a computer animator.

The Zuger then put together his portfolio and sent it to the Ringling College of Art and Design, where he was also accepted. He said goodbye to his family at the age of 18 and moved to Florida to pursue his dream job as a computer animator. “The students helped each other to get the best out of each other. We always stayed up late to be able to work even more,” Lemmens describes his college days. He spent the summers in Switzerland. During the summer of his sophomore year, he deepened his knowledge by taking an online animation course with Disney animator Frank Albany.

## **On the trail of the big dream**

In his last year at university, Lemmens animated the short film «Goalie», for which he received numerous awards. The short film is about a soccer goalie who is frustrated at not being a part of all the action. When the Zug native graduated from college in 2020, he received a job offer from Steamroller Studios, an animation studio in Florida.

According to Lemmens, the Covid year did not make it easy for many graduates to find a job right away. During his time at Steamroller Studios, the computer animator lived back in Switzerland as he was able to work from home. He worked on the film "Black Adam" and video games such as "Fortnite", "Horizon Forbidden West" and "Mortal Kombat".

Lemmens was able to make many connections while still in college. He was in contact with the Head of Animation at DreamWorks early on. In early 2022, he heard about a vacancy at DreamWorks from a friend. He recommended the man from Zug and immediately applied. Lemmens explains: "I contacted the Head of Animation and let him know that I would apply for the position. He loved it and I was hired the very next week."

## **Long animation process**

The 24-year-old says his everyday life looks a little different every day. At DreamWorks, there are different levels of animators who do other parts of the work. "After the management has told me what they want, I take the characters and breathe life into them," says Lemmens. Each character has 300 body parts that they can move and animate. 24 such movements happen every second. He can animate about four seconds of a scene per week, says the Zuger. In a final step, he focuses on all the small details, such as zooming in.

Lemmens loves animating because it doesn't feel like work to him. He thinks: "It's a rewarding feeling when I see people's reactions to my animations. It's knowing that the emotions I've created can be felt." The

24-year-old is currently working on the yet-to-be-announced film Meet the Gilmans. His next project will be "Kung Fu Panda 4" or "Trolls 3".

The 24-year-old has already fulfilled his dream of working at DreamWorks. In the distant future, he can imagine directing other animators or offering online classes. Lemmens is considering coming back to Europe at some point and starting his own company.