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# DIGITAL PRODUCTION

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# GUNEE Homme

From fabrics, patterns and colors, design concepts and Python scripts to final rendering: Within the last year, Thomas Gugel's Motion Design project for GUNEE Homme evolved into an outstanding work with a lot of intricate materials and structures, which now received a nomination for the Motion Graphics category of the animago.

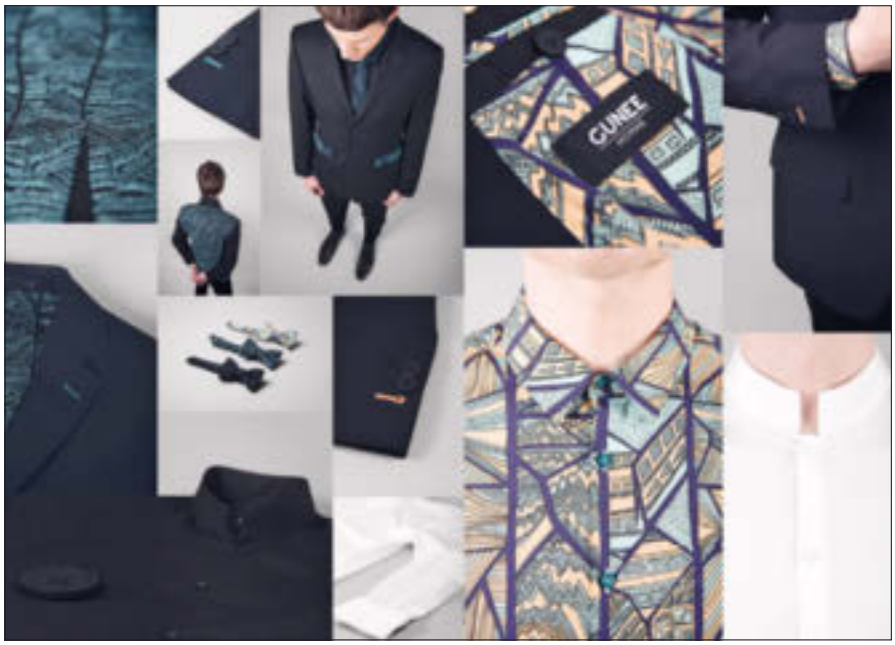
**by Tom Jansen**

Mostly in solo work, the Cologne-based artist has set himself a lot of goals with his image film project. The resulting video represents the current image film of the menswear label GUNEE Homme. The main objective of the clip was to show the production and creative process of its "Permanent Collection" (published in early 2019) in an abstract way.

DP: **The video looks great, but for those who never heard of GUNEE Homme before: what is it?**

**Thomas Gugel:** Thank you. GUNEE Homme itself was founded in 2014 and is a rather high-priced brand. They mainly combine hand-drawn illustrations and patterns with high-quality selected fabrics. These are elaborately printed or embroidered and used to make shirts, jackets or ties, for example. Especially interesting to me was the hard contrast between the black and white parts as well as the colorfulness of the patterns in the collection. Both had a decisive impact on the film. Also, the colors of the pattern "Stripes" (orange and petrol) determined the colors of the image film. Eugen Laitenberger is the creative head of the company. He draws all the patterns and designs the collections. He was also the one who approached me with the first idea and the first briefing.

DP: **What did the customer's briefing say?**

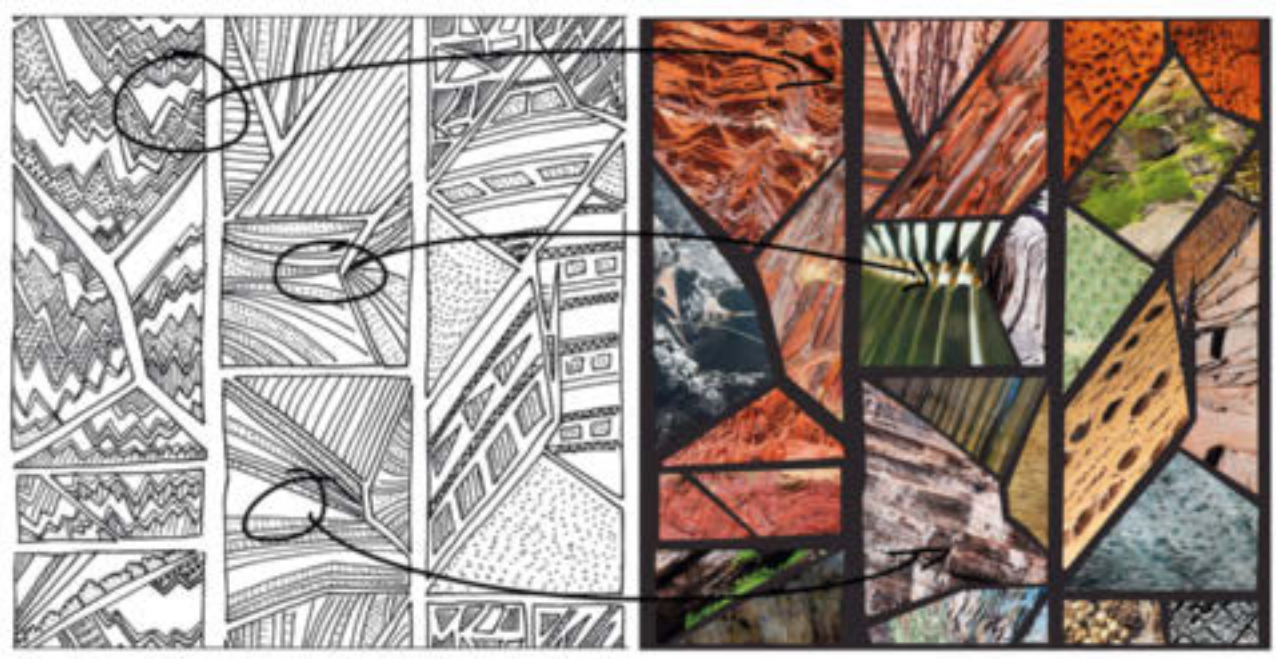



**Briefing Lookbook with the patterns and photographs of the "Permanent Collection".**

**Thomas Gugel:** The good thing is that Eugen Laitenberger is also a designer and illustrator. We had already worked together on other projects and therefore knew about our methods. He is also familiar with the creative process, knows what's behind it and therefore gave me a lot of freedom in my design. On the other hand, he knew how important it was for him as a customer to think about what he wants for GUNEE Homme. Therefore, important aspects and a direction for the concept were defined in the briefing. Apart from the already known pattern, he made a restriction that all objects should be based on a realistic functional principle – so the objects can in principle also be reproduced in reality. This limited my possibilities at first, but also encouraged a different way of thinking and gave me new ideas later on. In addition, GUNEE Homme had already taken a certain style direction with the previous campaigns. For the first collection they worked with a photographer from Berlin and already staged the fashion in an art context. The second collection also had sculptural aspects, which almost functioned as independent works, without forcing the clothing into the foreground.

**DP: And what was the direction for the "Permanent Collection"?**

**Thomas Gugel:** With the new "Permanent Collection", they wanted to tie in with this



**The patterns were substituted with natural references.**

The first R&D result for dynamic structures was inspired by a piece of foam.

The sediments of different types of rocks were the inspiration for the "Level-Lines" scene.

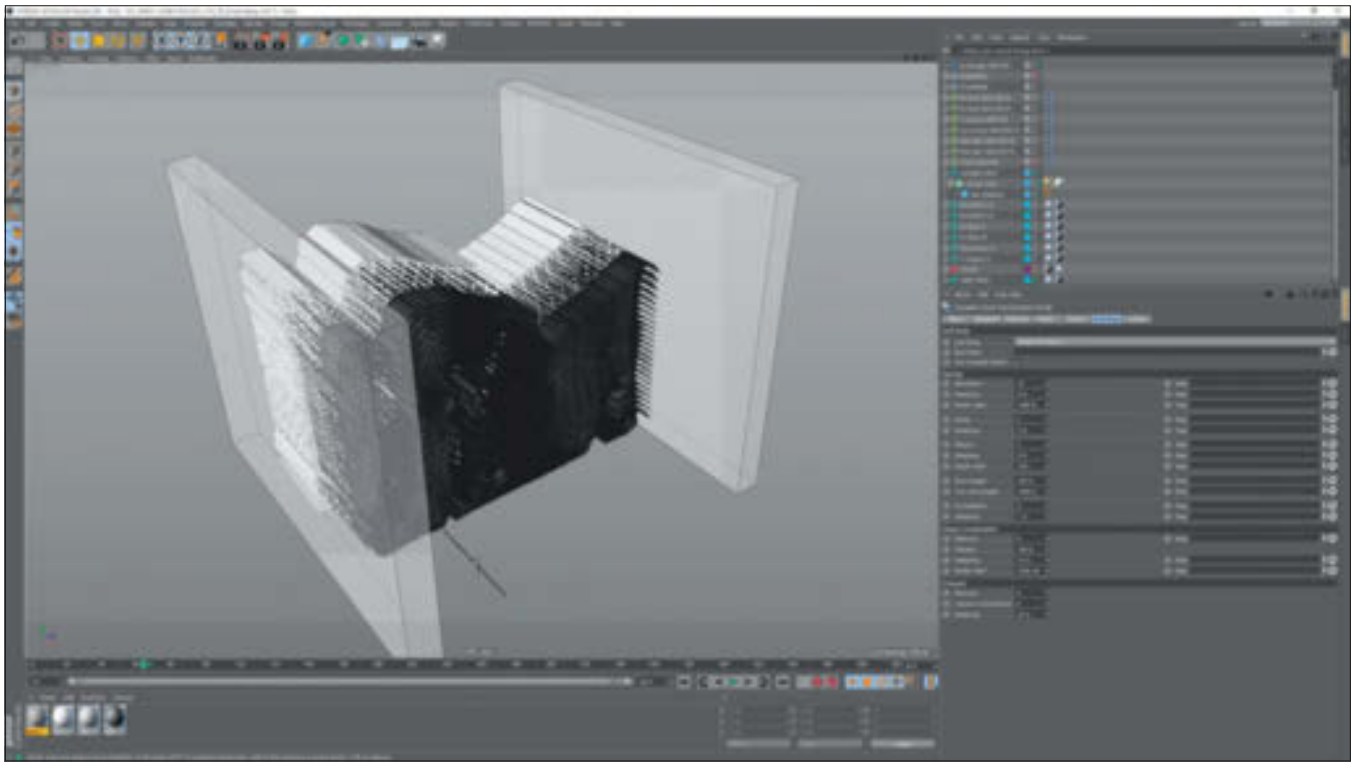
point. They also wanted to go one step further and produce three short videos for the campaign. This project changed with the development and presentation of the first ideas: The two founders of GUNEE Homme were convinced that the planned concept had more potential and that they therefore wanted to develop it into an image film. This decision ultimately led to the current result. However, the production costs increased enormously.

DP: **How long did you work on the film and how big was your team for it?**

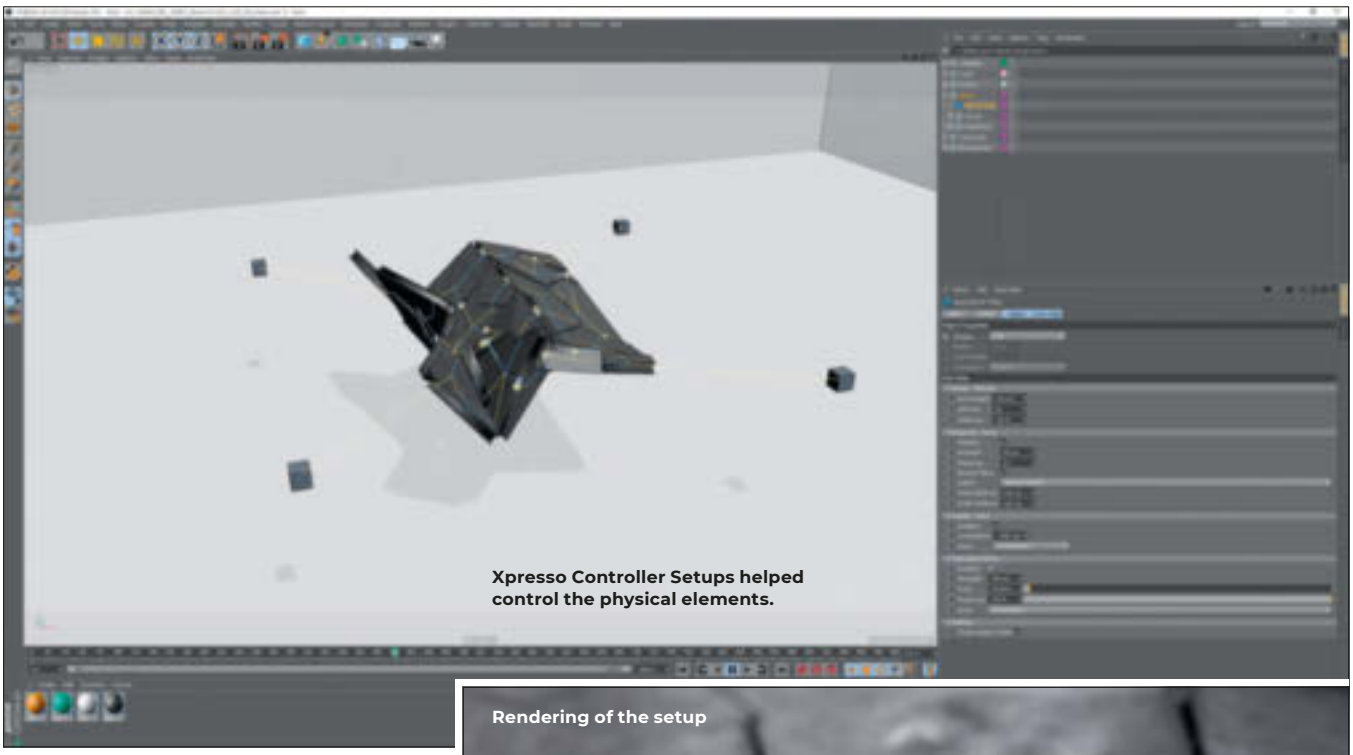
Thomas Gugel: There was a vague release date, but no time pressure yet. I was very flexible in the production of the video and therefore in a very comfortable situation. In the meantime, I had the possibility to support other customers or to work on other projects. Accordingly, the production period for the GUNEE Homme project had extended to about 1.5 years. Fortunately, the customer's priority right from the start was to create a high-quality result. The timing was secondary – which, clearly, is the exception in our industry. This gave the video the opportunity to grow and evolve for the client and me in a direction we are ultimately very happy with. However, this often very spontaneous, phased work made it difficult to coordinate timings with my freelance colleagues in the office.

DP: **How did you create the dynamic structures in Cinema 4D and what did your pipeline look like?**

Thomas Gugel: The structures were one of the most important conceptual elements in the video. A decisive turning point was to replace parts of the pattern of the "Permanent Collection" with images of stone formations, since they are nothing more than patterns that were created in a completely natural way in nature. I then formed the idea to base the whole video on this kind of process. With the restriction I mentioned earlier, I started to create cloner grids in Cinema 4D and connected them to each other with the softbody dynamics. Different collider objects could then act on this construct – that's how the first dynamic structures emerged. This is



Two collider objects squeeze the softbody cloner grid together to create the desired deformation as well as animation later on.



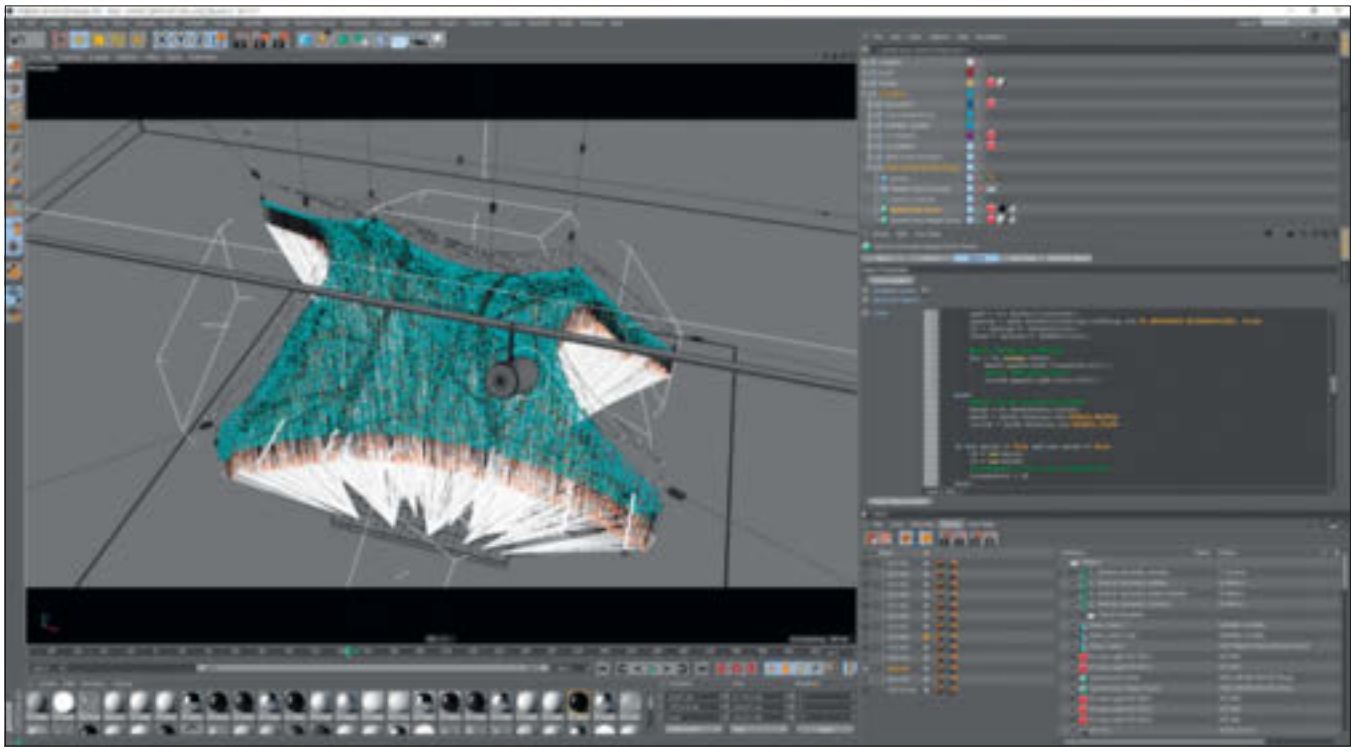
**Xpresso Controller Setups helped control the physical elements.**

**Rendering of the setup**

also how the "Level-Lines" scene was created, which is inspired by different sedimentary rocks. Two collider objects compress the construct from both sides. Due to the fact that the clones try to hold on to each other, the desired basic movement develops quite naturally. Connecting all rows of the cloner grid with a line then makes the structure visible.

DP: **Were there any particular issues with this kind of setup?**

Thomas Gugel: The only problem was the high number of clones, which was necessary



**To create all the lines, only two Python generators were required, which then took a lot of work.**

in some scenes in order to work out visually interesting details. Here the Alembic workflow proved to be absolutely helpful due to several points: When the basic setup and animation was ready, I exported the dynamics simulation as Alembic. This asset was then transferred to the final scene for shading and lighting. This has the advantage of separating the compute-intensive part of dynamics from the final render file. This does not only make the file a bit clearer, but above all makes it possible to work in the file almost in real-time. In addition, there are no nasty surprises with wrongly calculated dynamics in the teamrender system.

**DP: Most of the scenes have physical elements. How did you use them, and were there rigs to control them?**

**Thomas Gugel:** Yes, almost all scenes had different setups that could be called rigs. These were created in a rather intensive R&D phase: I started with simple combinations of spring and hinge connections and used Xpresso setups later on, which brought together the parameters that were responsible for the movement on a control null object. Thus, the dynamics could be handled very artistically. But also more complex systems which influenced the dynamics with the help of Python. The stretched material could for example be pulled into certain shapes at the push of a button without losing the physical aspect of movement.

**DP: Did you use other tools, such as Realflow or Xparticles?**

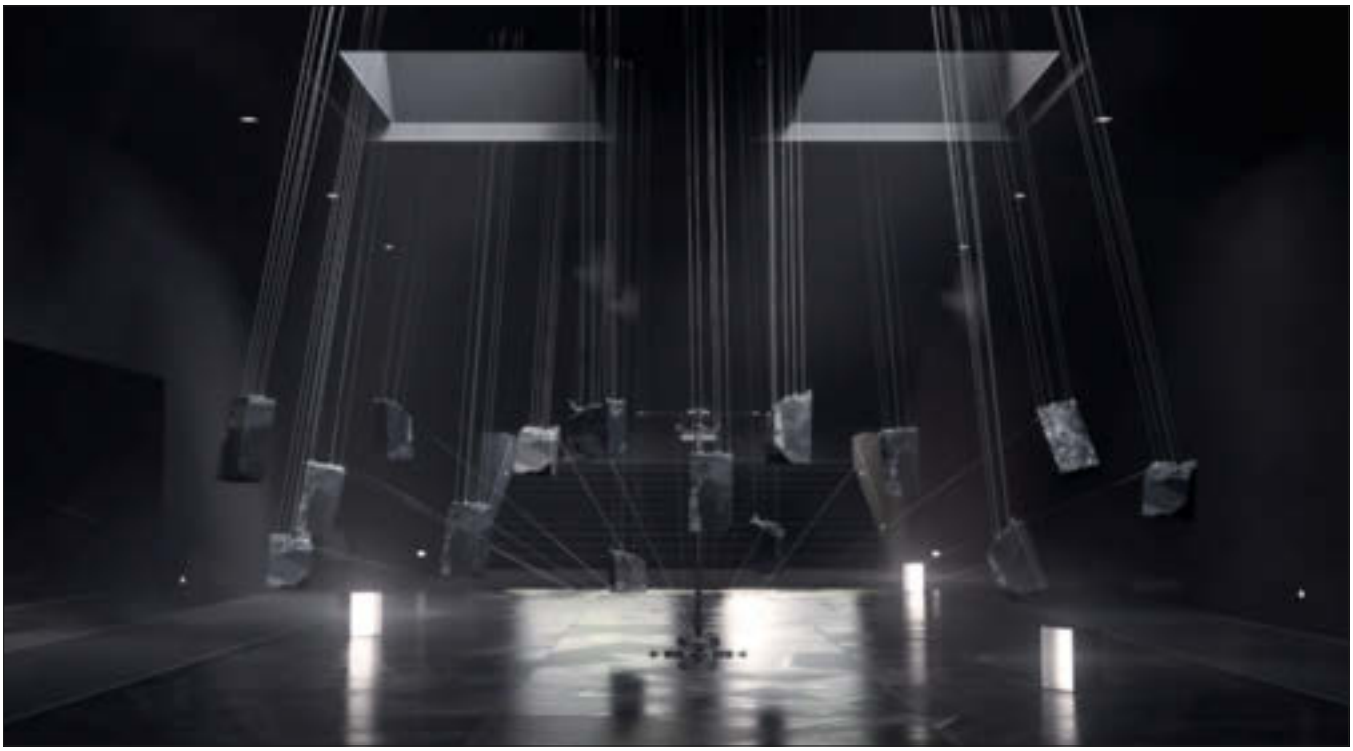
**Thomas Gugel:** Most of the tasks were done in Cinema 4D. Irrespective of the fact that it has been one of my favorite motion graphics tools for years, it was clear after the completion of the animatics that Cinema 4D was quite capable of meeting the requirements of this project. In addition, Houdini was occasionally used. But not to the extent one might expect. But even the possibility to unpack exported Alembic animations, sort the elements according to my needs and return them to Cinema 4D for shading as a prepared file, was very helpful. And – if you want to call it another tool – the Cinema 4D Python extension was also one of the most helpful and for me most exciting workflow supports in this project.

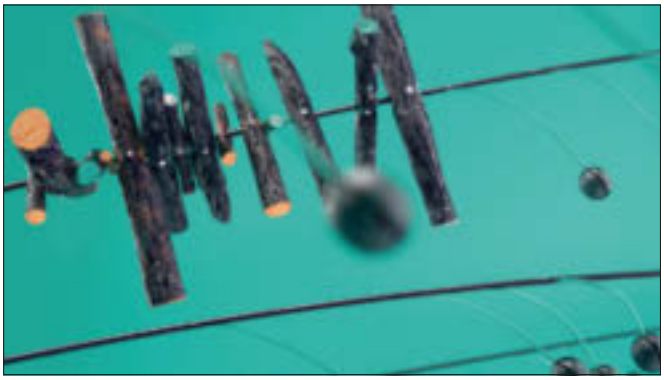
**DP: So how and why did you use Python to enhance your workflow?**

**Thomas Gugel:** This was my first time intensively using the Python extension capabilities of Cinema 4D. Looking back now, despite the initial difficulties, this step was a great choice. In the end, I was able to build small helpers that were tailored to a specific purpose and saved me a lot of work. It all started with a script that automatically renamed individual objects as well as entire structures. This can save a lot of time with many objects and keeps the file clean and clear. But this also allowed me to refer to these automated object names in other places and use them to create splines with the help of a Python generator, which automatically connected to the appropriate start and end points of the various objects. That way, I didn't have to worry about them anymore. This extended to small mograph effectors that could do exactly what I needed them for. There were several reasons why I used Python. On the one hand, I already had some basic scripting knowledge. On the other hand, it forced me to take a structured, very problem-solving-oriented approach, which is perfectly in line with my personal way of working. Another reason came from my experience with Expressions in After Effects. If you use scripting on a regular basis, it slowly becomes part of your everyday routine in the respective tools. And so, it doesn't slow a production down. Quite the opposite: It creates the possibility to automate tasks and thus to concentrate even better on the creative part of the project.

**DP: Rendering everything then was certainly a challenge?**

**Thomas Gugel:** Yes, absolutely, that was definitely one of the big hurdles that had to be overcome. But it was less exhausting than I initially suspected, which is largely due to the use of Redshift. Not only because of very great possibilities like controlling shaders via user-defined fields or providing large quantities of particles with their own geometry without any problems, but also and above all because of the speed and reliability. It gave me a lot of security in production. However, despite the available workstations/GPUs in my office, I only had limited rendering capacity available. What paid off here was the extra effort that went into the animatic during the conception phase and into a shot list at the start of production. So I had exact frame numbers and knew exactly which area





I needed, so that no additional frame was rendered that didn't end up in the film.

DP: **What would you change if you could do the project again?**
**Thomas Gugel:** Probably I would not choose to do such a project on my own again (laughs). But seriously, apart from being able to share the work, the exchange and feedback within a team is enormously important. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to talk to my colleagues about the project and discuss both conceptual and visual decisions in the office, which I am very grateful for. On the other hand, starting Redshift with this project was associated with a big learning curve. So, lighting the first scene of the video as an interior can be seen as an experiment rather than a necessity.

DP: **What have you been working on since then?**
**Thomas Gugel:** For now, no further work on GUNEE Homme ;) – but we, Eugen Laitenberger and I, have already talked about a new cooperation in the future. You can take a look at some of my work on our website. **›tj**

**Team**

**Thomas Gugel** – Concept, Design, Animation
**Eugen Laitenberger** – Pattern Design, Concept

▷ www.gunee-homme.com
▷ www.three-seconds.de