

BRIKK

ANIMATION OCH FILM

Internship Report

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HOW IT CAME TO THIS

I had finally made it. After weeks of anticipation and preparation I had arrived in the capital city of Sweden. And the best thing about it? No one was wearing masks. Ironically though for the first few days the temperatures were low and the winds ferocious, so I was wearing my scarf up to my nose anyways.

Ever since I started studying animation I knew that I wanted to do a semester abroad and about a year in I knew that it was going to be an internship instead of an exchange. Finishing animations during summer break, putting together a showreel and sending applications to studios all over Europe was a very nerve-racking but also super exciting process, it was after all the first step I was trying to take to get my foot into the animation industry.

I was almost a bit startled when I got an answer from Brikk showing interest just 14 minutes after sending them my application. From what I heard and read I was expecting to wait at least a few days for an answer. But as thrilled as I was, I did not accept this opportunity right away since I was deciding between them and the studio Nørlum in Denmark. I was contemplating for a long time between those two because three of my classmates would be doing an exchange in Viborg which was right next to the Danish studio and Nørlum had been on my radar for quite a while. Ultimately I went for the studio Brikk in Stockholm because they were straight-forward, working on a very nice project and I knew that there I would be able to do rough animation instead of just clean-up and colour, which was an amazing opportunity.

I was afraid that I would regret this decision but in hindsight I'm happy to say that I'm very content with the choice I made.

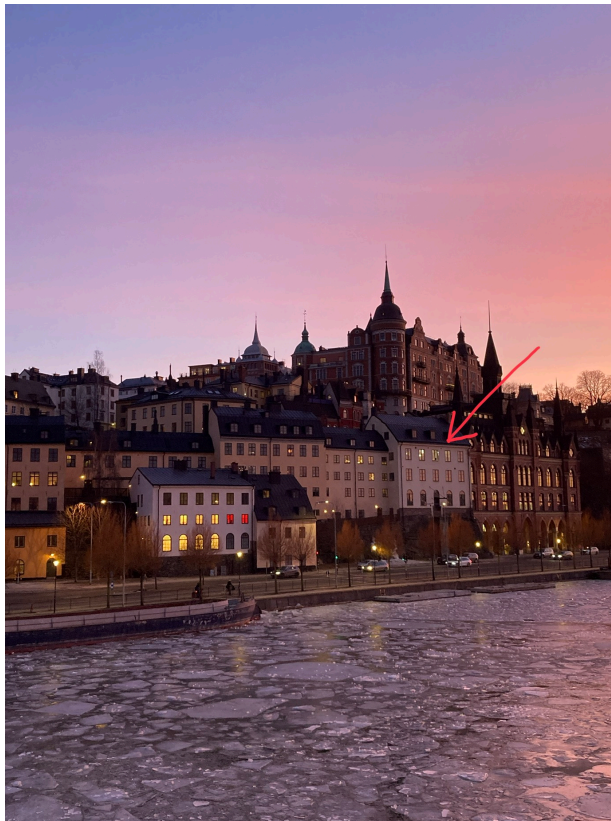
Me, happily wearing Brikk merch



THIS IS BRIKK

Brikk is a small studio with 10-15 employees founded in 2010. They had been doing mainly advertisements both in 2D and 3D and even some live action projects, which is why I was a bit sceptic about applying at first. Fortunately for me they have been putting a bit more focus on 2D lately, maybe because 2D cinematics have become somewhat popular in the gaming industry recently.

Their location is very central, right on the northern “coast” of the island Södermalm. It is a bit hidden in a quieter alley but only about 10 minutes by foot from both metro stations Slussen and Gamla Stan. My workplace was almost right next to a window, so it was unusually bright compared to the dark ateliers at school and because the office is located rather high up it had a beautiful view as well. Whenever my eyes needed a break, I could look over to Gamla Stan (Old Town) and the city hall on the other side of the canal.



Location of the studio



View from the window



The Brikk side

The studio itself is also really pretty. It's very open and bright with nice furniture. It looks like it's straight out of an Ikea catalogue, also because their furniture is from Ikea. It's divided into two working areas: the Brikk side (with more sunlight and a nice view) and the freelancers side. So half of the people in the office are not part of Brikk but people renting a desk. To my disappointment there was no 2D animation freelancer but mostly 3D guys working in NFTs. Apart from the working stations the studio has two meeting rooms, a couch corner, two toilets (and one shower) and a kitchen where you can't cook.

During the first two weeks of my internship the office was quite empty because everyone was still working from home due to the Covid situation. Actually Samuel (Co-founder of Brikk) offered me to start the internship remotely but I decided that working in an almost empty office couldn't be worse than working all alone at home so I still went to Sweden as soon as I could. Not long afterwards all my coworkers announced their return to the office but unfortunately meeting them got delayed a bit further because right then I caught covid myself.

WHAT I WORKED ON

Like I mentioned at the beginning, the project they were working on was one of the main factors why I decided to do my internship here. On their website I found their game trailer for the computer game Valheim, which was an anime-style animation of Vikings in a mystical fantasy world. When I joined them they were in the midst of production for their second Valheim film, which would be the cinematic intro to the game.

So far I had only seen the animatic and I was so excited to be part of it! I thought I'd maybe start with clean-up or something similar but instead after a short welcoming and introduction to my workplace they decided I would do tie-down on an already existing rough. Which caught me very off-guard because it felt like so much responsibility already when I was only yet a green student. But ok, I was not going to argue with that, after all I came with the desire to do rough animation.

Another hurdle at the beginning, which turned out to be no hurdle at all, was to work in a different Software than I was used to. Toon Boom Harmony. I wrote them in my email that I would be practicing it at school but like the ultimate procrastinator that I am I downloaded the trial version on the weekend I arrived in Sweden and watched some of the few tutorials that exist on Youtube. I don't think that would have worked with any 3D software, but it worked in my case. And by now it doesn't feel fake anymore to have Toon Boom listed on my CV.

Anyways, my first tiedown was a fail... because it was so clean, that it instantly qualified as clean-up. This is something that I've heard a few times now, here as well as back in school, that my roughs (and apparently tie-downs) are way too clean and I don't know if this is good or not. After that first shot they knew my tempo and how I worked and I got promoted to do rough animation! I was very proud.

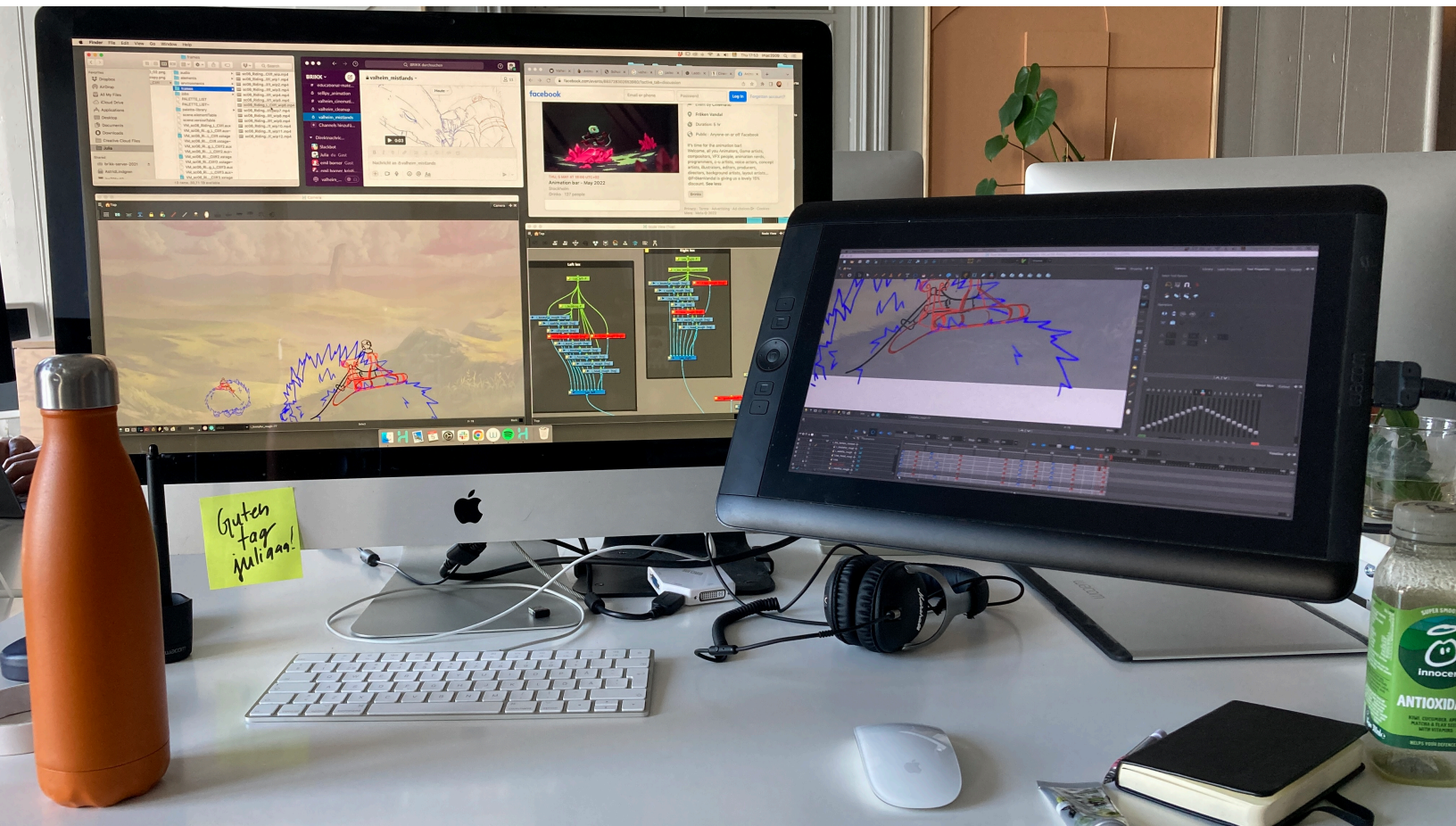
It felt great to work in a bigger team, where tasks got distributed. I think the best thing is when all the steps before and after the animation part are getting done by someone else who knows what they are doing. Sonya, my desk neighbor, was painting beautiful backgrounds, which is something that I hate (probably because I'm not good at it). And the most satisfying part is when the backgrounds and animation go to a compositor, which equals being a magician. After compositing everything looks just ten times better. And all you do is the part you love and together as a team you create something awesome. It's the best. I love animation.

It kind of feels like when you have been doing amateur-music-covers where you play every instrument and then suddenly you play just your favourite instrument in a well-harmonized orchestra. It was far from perfect though, because this was actually one of their first bigger

projects and you could tell that they were figuring a lot of organisational things out on the way. There was for example no naming convention and no general folder structure.

After having worked on the Valheim Cinematic for quite some time Brikk decided to pause the project. The deadline was super far away so they had time to do other projects inbetween. They actually work on several projects at the same time, their 3D people were doing a trailer for Minecraft and there was another project going on for which they hired a bunch of freelancers. I got transferred to Sellpy - a second hand clothing company that needed three very short advertisement clips for social media. It was live-action footage with several animated elements an it was by far my least favourite part of the whole internship. It was not just because I didn't really like the style of the whole thing but mostly because the clients were super indecisive and thus made changes all the time. You could tell that they had not a lot of experience with animation and that they had no idea what they wanted or how to express it. It was quite a relief once it was over.

My desk



And that's when I hopped over to the third project, which was another Valheim trailer but this time for a game update called Valheim Mistlands. Here I got mostly tiny animations because there were a lot of wide shots where you could see the landscape the characters would travel through. Also they had Redoad, their super strong in-house animator who did all the action scenes, so there would be nothing left to do for me. Still, by this time I was relatively confident in my workflow and I felt like I had found my place.

GENERAL ATMOSPHERE

The working environment was very relaxed and the general atmosphere was nice as well. Since the company has a relatively small number of employees, you get to know everyone pretty fast and it feels a bit like a family. Speaking of, during my internship there was quite the babyboom. Two babies were born and about five guys announced that they would become fathers (from Brikk and from the freelancers). So you can imagine that there was a lot of dad energy radiating, everyone is very wholesome in the office. The workhours are reasonable, maybe also to be family-friendly. I usually started at 9am, had an hour lunchbreak and finished work at 6pm. Since I was an intern I didn't have to keep track of my hours that precisely but the goal was to do 8 hours a day. Sometimes there would be a few people staying longer but overtime is voluntary and always paid. It needs to be said though that I haven't experienced crunch time, but I also feel like they're trying their best to avoid it and doing a good job with that.

Other than that there are some nice moments to bond with the company, like when we were going for Brikk-Lunches (where food is paid by the company) or when we were organising After-Works. There's usually a lot of wine, also on Friday afternoon. They even have a wine fridge in their kitchen! I know that they went on a skiing trip together before I arrived and for my goodbye party we went to the Swedish countryside and spent a lovely day in Samuels Countryhouse. There we played some midsommar minigames even though it was not yet midsommar.

A strong contributor to the great atmosphere at work were also all the animals that were around. At the beginning there was good boy Eros, then good boy Arnie and once we even had a cat at work, but only for one day.



Good boy Eros

Good boy Arnie





Spontaneous jam session at the taco tuesday AW

I made Äplermagrone for my coworkers because they were wondering why I was eating pasta with applesauce



LIFE IN STOCKHOLM

I got used to living in Stockholm pretty fast. Swedish is a funny language but if you know German and English there's already a lot you can understand (at least when reading). And all Swedes speak such good English that there are never problems with communication. The people itself behave similar to us Swiss people so there was no culture shock at all, I was only a bit taken aback that most of them ate lunch at 11:30am which I think is super early. The prices in Swedish Krona are easy to understand as well since 10kr are around 1CHF and everything is about as expensive as in Switzerland. They even have Coop.

Stockholm is a beautiful city, even though it's quite big it doesn't feel stressful. There are a lot of parks and nature around and because of all the canals it doesn't feel cramped either. If you're close to a metro station it's also fine to live further out where it's even calmer, everything is super well connected. Personally I missed having mountains around but the magical forests were a good enough alternative and there are still some sweet spots in the city to discover.

LAST THOUGHTS

All in all the internship was a great experience work-wise and life-wise. Honestly I probably would have learned more technical skills if I had gone to a school but it was a great chance to gain some first experience in the actual industry and I now have a lot more confidence in my skills. It was also interesting to talk to the freelancers and see how they work because this is something I hadn't considered so far. And right after my internship ended I was able to make my own freelance experience because Brikk hired me for another short in-between project.

I am happy that I ended up here in Stockholm, Sweden is a lovely country and the people were all amazing. I could imagine coming back here someday (if they take me) and it definitely changed my view regarding the time after my studies. The future seems less scary now.

A few impressions from Stockholm

