

SHOCK THE MONKEY

A VR FILM BY NICOLAS BLIES & STÉPHANE HUEBER-BLIES

An experiment of anticipation in virtual reality
on the privatization of our imagination.
Will you be able to regain your freedom?

A production by

a_BAHN
INDEPENDENT PRODUCTION COMPANY

lucid
realities
studio

ZEILT
productions



The advertising industry that is used to create consumers is a phenomenon that has developed in the freest countries.

100 years ago, it became clear that it would be more difficult to control the population by force. The freedom gained was far too great. We needed new ways to control people. With this new objective, the advertising industry exploded to make consumers.

The idea is to control everyone, to transform society into a perfect system. A system based on a duo. This duo is you and television, or today, you and the Internet, that shows you what an ideal life looks like, what you should have. And you will spend your time and energy to get it. (...) We create desires, we lock the population into the role of consumers. (...) Consumers who must be spectators, not participants in our democracies.

Noam Chomsky



SUMMARY

2046. SOMA is an activist against the dominant system. It is also the code name for the spirit liberation program she and her team have been running for several months. A program that seeks to stem the privatization of our minds by multinationals and consumerist ideology. SOMA kidnaps you and encourages you to free yourself from this conditioning. With your permission, she infiltrates your brain. You then begin a psychedelic journey into the depths of your imagination to allow you to regain your free will. A luminous, poetic, militant and psychoanalytical journey to regain your creativity and critical thinking skills.

Length: 30'

Format: CGI Animation + Live Sequences

A film in virtual reality by

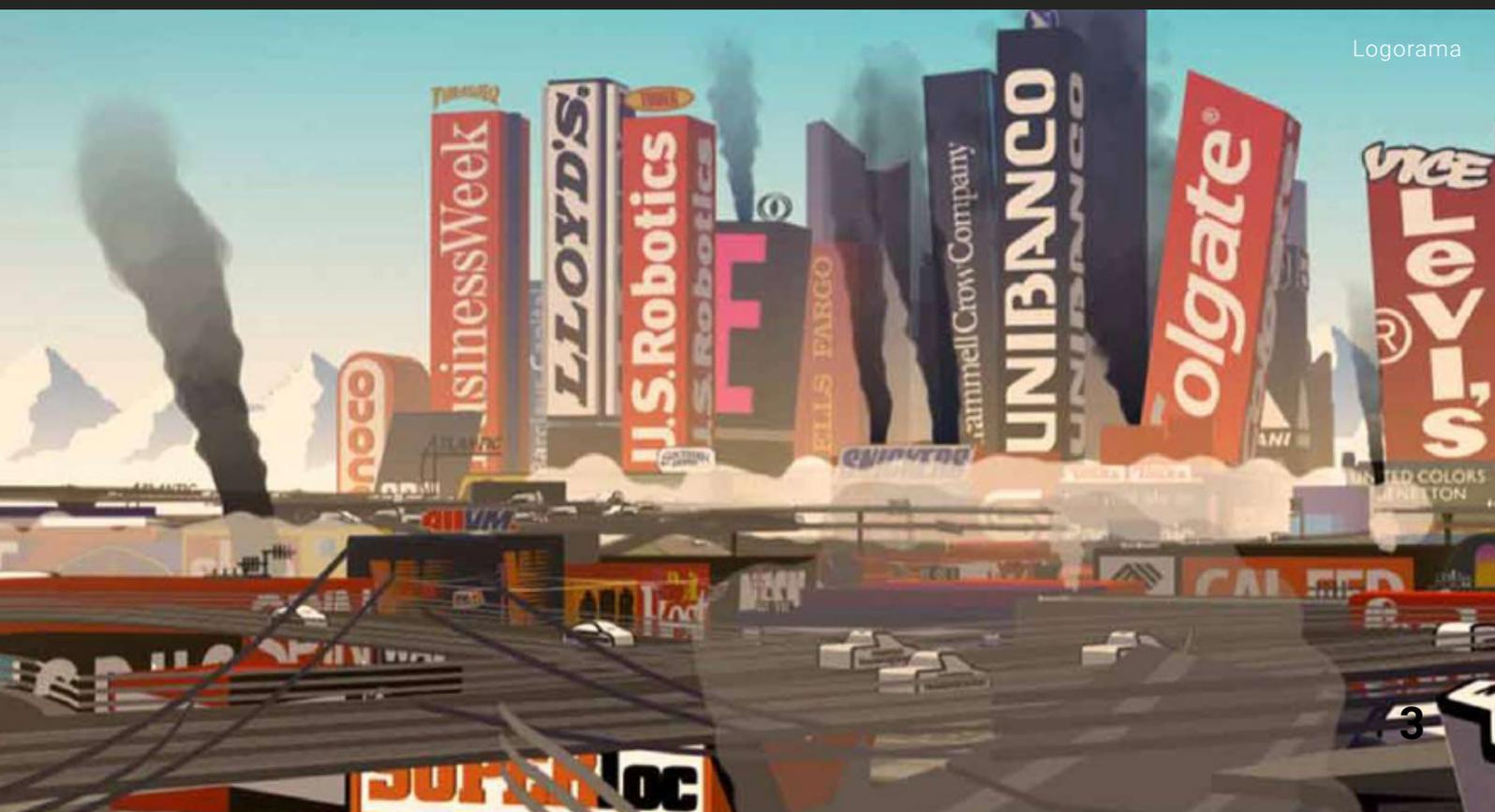
Nicolas BLIES and Stéphane HUEBER-BLIES

Produced by

Marion GUTH, François LE GALL, Chloé JARRY and Laurent WITZ

A production by

a_BAHN (Lu) - LUCID REALITIES (Fr) - ZEILT Productions (Lu)



Logorama

SYNOPSIS

In 2046, at the twilight of the capitalist system, in a society in full implosion, a citizens' movement led to the constitution of a controversial lawsuit against communication and marketing companies. On the dock are accused, advertisers, experts in marketing psychology and neuroscience; the theorists of the "fabric of consent" accused of forcing millions of citizens to act against their will, to the detriment of the collective interest. The citizen movement, as a civil party to the trial, denounces the "privatization of brains", a crime against our imagination and our free spirit that would be at the origin of profound social, psychological, ecological and anthropological disorders. While the trial is taking place in a tense social climate confronting pro-capitalist citizens and their opponents, an activist group, led by SOMA, an activist supporting the trial, continues its action to free minds by kidnapping individuals and infiltrating their brains to help them regain their freedom.

You are kidnapped and then begin for you a phantasmagorical, hallucinogenic mental journey where the imagination penetrates "artificial paradises" in which you confront the conditioning of your brain, and its privatization, through the strategies of multinationals. With the help of SOMA, you will have to progress in the knowledge of this alienation and try to reconquer one by one the infected territories of your brain. Your objective? Take back your free will, your critical spirit, your creativity. Abandon your position as a consumer and take over that of a free citizen. At any time you have the possibility to give up, but the further the journey goes, the more your deepest convictions crack to give way to a new hope. A luminous, poetic, militant and psychoanalytical journey to reconquer yourself.



TREATMENT

INTRODUCTION

2046. Society, in full rejection of the capitalist ideology that had dominated the world until then, is imploding. It is divided into two castes, each trying to impose its own vision of the world. Proponents of the old system, growth-based capitalism, and those who want to build a new world based on degrowth.

*

(LIVE SEQUENCE). I'm in the dark. I can feel the vibrations of an engine. Bearing noises. Wheels maybe, wheels on the asphalt. I can hear the crowd. Screams. I'm in a vehicle. I can hardly see anything. I can see through the tinted window of protest movements in the street. The van is driving as the urban landscape unfolds in front of me. Suddenly, the light of a torch dazzled me. I'm in the back of a van. Around me, no one. Across the street, I see two people sitting in the front. One of them, a woman, is aiming at me with the torch. There are no windows, all I see is the metal from the walls of the van and the wooden floor. I was kidnapped. I hear the two people talking in the front. The woman calls herself SOMA. She increases the sound of the radio. *"In a context of very tense social movements, the controversial trial against communication and advertising companies will begin today its 17th day. Since the first day, we have observed many altercations, it is obvious that the trial divides society"*. The van stops. They shut down the radio and then the engine. The two people got out of the vehicle and reappeared a few moments later in the back of the van, when the door was opened. I can now see the young woman's face clearly.

(LIVE SEQUENCE). I'm in an apartment, lying on a bed, in the middle of the living room. I have electrodes on my skull and arms. The woman in the van: *"My name is SOMA"*... She comes to sit next to me in a chair next to the bed. She's looking at me. Her expression is decided, reckless and yet I feel benevolence. *"We'll set you free. Do you agree?"* His partner interrupts her. He is sitting on a chair with a computerized console at the foot of the bed. *"Free myself from what?"* I thought. I look around to try to understand. *"They talk about us,"* he says, showing the news. *"On the fringes of the trial, a group of activists called SOMA continues to operate. According to our sources, the militant group kidnaps individuals to offer them to infiltrate their brains and free them from what they define as "their consumer condition". A witness released a few days earlier spoke to the journalist, a little haggard. "I don't know who they are. I can't say anything. I don't remember everything that happened. (seeming in his thoughts) But I think it's important. Yes. What they do seems important to me."* The journalist continued: *"The police are actively looking for those responsible, but the group is supported by an increasing number of citizens, which makes the task complicated for the police"*. A moment of silence in the room. SOMA and her partner look at each other.

SOMA turns around and gently says to me, *"It's a recommendation. The person we released yesterday is a friend of yours. She asked us to do you this service"*.

I accept.

Information on level 1

Theme: Advertising strategies (global or highly targeted strategies with neuroscience) target and act on our anxieties, fears, guilt (reptilian brain) to trigger emotional reactions resulting in an act of consumption. Strategies try to act on our brains against our will, specifically on specific areas related to these emotions to provoke irrational buying acts. Purchases that do not meet a real, rational, functional need. We buy to belong to a group, to answer a quest for ideals. We accumulate objects without any logic of real utility. An endless consumption that feeds growth.

Consequences: Le geste d'achat est censé nous reconforter car il nous apporte un sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté, celle des consommateurs, celui d'un certain style de vie idéalisée par la publicité. La publicité fabrique des consommateurs. La religion agit exactement de la même manière sur notre cerveau avec pour différence que le capitalisme n'apporte qu'une seule solution à notre mal-être : la consommation irrationnelle. Cette réduction au matériel, à l'inutilité organisée, est vite insatisfaisante, renforce notre solitude, notre incapacité à nous épanouir par d'autres actions.

Interactive action: Break.

*

The story (continued)

(The scene is accompanied by the diegetic voice from the TV station that broadcasts the trial, animated by the voices of the judge, prosecutor, defence counsel and plaintiff counsel. The interventions of these voices come to accompany the VRnaute's journey in the scene)

[CGI animation] I'm in a dark space. I look at my hands, they are virtual, polygonal. Next to me, SOMA now looks like a monkey with a face painted with white striped patterns. "Do you wonder who I am? And what are we doing here?" she told me. "For almost two centuries, we have been undergoing an anthropological transformation. Do you think that the thousands of commercials you've been storing since birth, often against your will, have left your brain intact? You have been skillfully conditioned by the system and this has distracted you from what is good for you and for society. You think there's no link between the climate shock and this transformation? You have unknowingly become a consumer. And this has consequences for society. Your brain is contaminated. We will now release him." (The use of the VR controllers is activated). Cut in the black.

I open my eyes. The space I am in is immense, a desert space like we find in New Mexico. It is dark. The air is vaporous. Around us, up to very high in the sky, hundreds of consumer objects from our daily lives: shoes, clothes, cars, household appliances, electronic objects, food products... and humans... with identical faces, a hilarious face (cf. Yue Minjun), almost crazy, a frozen face. All float like weightlessness. The space is illuminated by the artificial light of a huge luminous screen located far in front, like a monolith as high as a skyscraper, set in the middle of the desert. Advertising images are broadcast in a loop. A universe of brands, logos, hypnotic spots radiates its artificial light into the desert that surrounds us.

We move forward and approach the light block. We are tiny compared to this monolith. SOMA discovers with me this space that belongs only to me. She explains to me that every brain she infiltrates is different. A space like this, she hadn't seen one yet. Yet she recognizes the frozen and hilarious smile of these humans floating like models. "They are hypnotized by this light that radiates all the space around us. They are appeased, they belong to a group."

LEVEL 1: FEAR

It is impossible to get any closer to the block that radiates its light without being blinded. SOMA picks up a piece of rock from the ground and hands it to me. *"Break it, we won't be able to continue our journey with this hypnotic light."* I take the rock and try a first throw, the second is the right one. The huge block like a glass screen cracks and explodes. The light goes out and all the objects around us fall to the ground. The space is illuminated by the natural light of what looks like stars. Behind the broken screen, in the cavity of the monolith, an immense face in the shape of a long banner floats in the air (cf. Dali's painting in the moodboard). Eyes closed, head slightly deformed downward. His face is sad. The head rests on fragile wooden supports. SOMA recognizes that this is our "fear". She understands that we are in the reptilian brain, the most primitive part of our brain where our deepest, most animal instincts are found. We are approaching.

Eyes slowly open and watch us, desperate. Electrodes are attached to it. Suddenly, a huge electric shock hit his face. A great rail comes to break the silence. The face closes the eyes of pain. A tear gently flows down his face. SOMA points out to me that the objects that were on the ground a few moments earlier are slowly recovering from the height. The broken screen, on the other hand, is slowly being restored.

The face opens his eyes, looks at me and in a deep voice speaks to us. *"None of this calms me down or so little."* Objects in weightlessness pass in front of us. *"That's not what I need."* He closes his eyes. SOMA explains to me that advertisers seek to reach our emotions by playing on our fears, our anxieties. They are looking for ways to directly touch our deepest instincts to encourage us, against our will, to buy products that we don't need but that would make us happier. At the same time, a new electric shock hit the face. The tear on his face falls to the ground. *"Their target is to touch our fear to push us to the irrational,"* explains SOMA. *"Your brain is trapped in this mechanics. We must free him."*

As the screen gradually rebuilt, SOMA encouraged me to leave the monolith so as not to remain locked up. While consumer objects are already back in weightlessness, masks remain on the floor, those of floating mannequins. I pick up the mask with a hilarious and frozen face. SOMA explains that all these models are floating humans in loss of individual identity. They do not find real happiness in consumption, it does not satisfy them. They are deeply unhappy, in search of meaning. *"These hundreds of bodies that surround us represent the victims of modern society."*

Everything disappears. Black. I always hear TV in the background, with the voices of prosecutors and lawyers, and then the image distorts. The real face of SOMA is confused with the virtual world. SOMA repeats to me: *"Take off the mask."* I understand that I have to put my hands close to my face to remove a hilarious mask that I was also wearing, without knowing it. SOMA smiles at me. To continue my journey, I understand that I have to break the monolithic screen again. I throw my mask on him. A powerful lighting effect makes the whole space disappear. The face that embodied my "fear" is there, isolated in this space. There are no more electrodes attached to him. The monolith has also disappeared as have floating objects and mannequins. The space is empty again, liberated, soothed. You can only hear the air blowing through my ears. The face is serene.

Fade in black.

(Live action) SOMA's voice, speaking to Peter (her partner's name): *"He has taken the first step"*. Only the TV is in the background. We see the images of the trial on the screen. The defence lawyer denies that he used neuroscience to influence consumers against their will. *"The idea of these processes was to bring the product to life not for its usefulness but to provoke a feeling, an attachment to the brand's universe. We proposed a lifestyle, a model of society."* The defence lawyer's unequivocal answer: *"And so we overproduce useless things, we exhaust our resources, we accumulate products that we do not know how to recycle, all to reassure a fear that you yourself have participated in creating?"* SOMA looks at me: *"We must continue our journey"*.

LEVEL 1: FEAR



LEVEL 2: THE SELF

Information on level 2

Theme: *Capitalism needs growth to exist. Mass consumption is therefore vital to the system. And yet, to sell, advertising needs to make consumers forget that they are part of a mass consumption logic. The consumer needs to feel "different", "unique". Advertising will therefore flatter his/her SELF by personalizing his offer, by bludgeoning his mind. A strategy developed hand in hand with psychoanalysts from the very beginning.*

Consequences: *The direct consequence of this conditioning is the diversion of our minds from the collective interest. Our individualism fed by the system provokes a lack of interest, a detachment from the collective, from political action. We are losing our collective identity and our ability to influence the world.*

Interactive action: *Flying away.*

*

The story (continued)

(CGI ANIMATION) I am now in a living room, my living room, simply lit by a lamp next to my library. The television is on and also transmits the trial (live action). The lawyer for the civil parties uses an archive of the intellectual Noam Chomsky: *"The idea is to control everyone, to transform society into a perfect system. A system based on a duo. This duo is you and television, or today, you and the Internet, that shows you what an ideal life looks like, what you should have. And you will spend your time and energy to get it. (...)"* The television goes off. I go to the door and open it.

I then discovered the same salon but much larger. Something has changed, you feel like you're being slightly swung. In the middle of the room is an armchair in which an individual sits. I see him from behind. SOMA and I are approaching. Suddenly, a huge shock shakes the room. A huge crack of wood and rock explodes in our ears. We are all wavering. The lamp overturned. The room stabilizes again. The interior of the room is comfortable. A paradise. There are famous brand logos everywhere, magnificently inlaid in the decor, the woodwork, the tapestry. The decoration is both cosy and elegant. We move forward again to get closer to the chair. An individual is seated (note: a man if I am a man, a woman if I am a woman according to the personalization of the experience). He looks at me, looks at my face. He smiled. *"Can you do me a favor and pick up this object?"*. He points to a light bulb on the ground. I look at Soma waving at me to obey. I'm doing it. I pick up the object and hand it over.

He puts it in his jacket pocket. The individual is strange, obese and wears a sports tracksuit. The wind is blowing hard against the window panes. The individual eats greedily. *"Isn't it comfortable?"* he said to me. *"Excuse me? Isn't it comfortable?"*. Soma slightly lowers her head. *"You know, I'm constantly invoked, flattered, overvalued. That's nice. It's nice. (pause). Isn't it comfortable?"*. Soma looks at me and tells me: *"He is your SELF. Your psychic instance"*. He turns around and keeps eating and mumbles, *"Of course it's comfortable, of course"* and laughs.

Soma points me to the door opposite the room. I approach and open it. A strong and icy wind whips my face. The room is like a cabin on the edge of a precipice. We are in the sky on a piece of land detached from the ground. We are moored to the earth by a long chain. The cabin floats in the air. The outside of the cabin is toxic. Polluted. Dusty. We find inlaid in this dirt the same brand logos as those on the inside but now degraded and gnawed at by dirt. The cabin is in danger. Every minute that passes, pollution continues to damage the islet in weightlessness. It threatens to disintegrate. The wind continues to rock the islet and cabin. In a few moments, everything may collapse.

LEVEL 2: THE SELF

The story (continued)

"We must leave this place. You must free your SELF before he is definitively isolated" SOMA told me. I go back inside and understand that I have to guide the individual to the precipice and with it, fly away. We're heading towards the door and approaching the precipice. The sale is blowing on our 3 faces. We are far from the ground. We feel dizzy. The individual looks around and grins, "This is not what I imagined. (He slightly lowers his head and mumbles). *That's not what I was told.*" SOMA jumps and flies away. It's my turn now. Before that, I have to push the individual so that he too can fly away. I'm pushing him. I too take a step forward and fly away. Behind us the chain breaks and definitively takes the islet and the cabin into the air.

In the air, I hear SOMA's voice chuckling in my ear, like a voice that resonates in my head: "Your brain has been totally diverted from who is good for society to the benefit of individual comfort and pleasure. While the brands boast about the pleasure of their product, they hide the ecological and social consequences of this consumer race from you. Our individual comfort and culpable pleasure multiplied by 7 billion inhabitants is destructive. But you are anaesthetised so that you can continue to use."

I'm flying over a meadow. In the middle in the middle of it, an armchair and a lamp on foot. I can already see my SELF on the ground approaching the lamp. It is dark. Strangers, women and men, are also on the prairie. Strangers, standing up, waiting.

SOMA's voice: "By freeing your SELF from the isolation of his comfort, you give him a chance to regain otherness. You have managed to free up this space."

I approach, put on the bulb, light up the space and sit down. Strangers approach him in this new territory.

Cut.

(LIVE) A television in front of me. In the dark. The same excerpt from Noam Chomsky's interview reappears. "Advertising makes consumers. The aim is to create ill-informed consumers who will make irrational choices (...) often against their own interests. That's all advertising is for. If society does not change, we will be a society based on Adam Smith's despicable precept: "Everything for me, nothing for others"."



LEVEL 3: DISPOSSESSION OF OUR CRITICAL MIND

Information on level 3

Thematic: *By transforming artistic creation into a commercial industry, and by taking over the contested cultural codes, advertising makes our subversive and critical tools ineffective. Similarly, trademark law is increasingly extending to areas of public heritage. Linguistic elements, characters from our common history, creations, ideas in the public domain now belong to private multinationals.*

Consequences: *Capitalist society, through advertising, has destroyed our critical spirit and new capitalist developments are gradually depriving us of our tools of creation and thought. Without being able to invoke our common culture, our language, our critical and subversive mind, we can no longer think and question our world freely. "Ideas must remain in their world" (Plato)*

Interactive gesture: *Creating through musical gesture*

(CGI ANIMATION) It is dark. A bulb on the ceiling lights a door in front of us. I'm getting closer. A sign on the door indicates "My Imagination - Private Property". I open it and we take the step.

We find ourselves in the middle of an industrial area. A huge fair occupies the premises and in the background is a huge 19th century factory on which TheWorldofIdeasFactory© is displayed. The entire fair is surrounded by a high-security barrier that contrasts with the colourful attractions. The atmosphere is orange, twilight. The music of the fair resonates in an empty spectator space.

SOMA: *"We must no longer delay."* We stroll through the fair while heading towards the factory. To our right, a scene in the colours of a soda brand, a concert is being played. Musicians who strangely resemble English 60-year-olds play a popular rock band. The musicians tied up and articulated like puppets on the ceiling of the stage. In the sky, an inflatable pig appears in the distance, crossing the clouds. As it passes, it starts raining banknotes. At our feet the first bills fall. To our left, a big wheel turns. Characters strangely resembling great names in painting and literature: Houellebecq, Dali, Koons, Sir Conan Doyle, Picasso, are firmly attached to their seats behind a chain that holds them. Their faces are tense. We are moving forward. SOMA tells me the entrance to the factory a little further on. To the right of the factory is a huge truck loaded by pigs. They wear words firmly linked by ©. Orange© Apple© Shell© Face© Droid© Time© Sherlock Holmes© Underground© Conan© LittleMermaid©

I approach the factory entrance and enter. Inside, a disproportionately high pulpit on which sits a man in a suit and tie. In front of him, at the foot of the pulpit, a pig, dressed very elegantly. It is facing a table on which a small machine is placed. Hundreds of books surround it. He takes a book. Addressing the man in the suit: *"What about this one?"* The man in costume: *"Dracula? All right, accept the privatization."* The pig opens it, tears out pages and puts them in the machine. The machine then growls a sound of a cash register. The pig is alone, back to us. He turns around at our entrance with an empty gaze and then gets back to work. We approach and notice that the machine is connected to the conveyor belt that was filling the truck outside. The pig continues his work, impassive. From the top of his flesh, the man in the suit invites us: *"Did you ask for permission? How did you get in here?"* SOMA looks at me and answers *"I am here with the owner of the place. He's coming to reclaim his brain."* The man in the suit, looking surprised: *"Madam, I don't know who you are. But you are here in TheWorldofIdeasFactory©, this is a private concession. This is my home. Sir, I don't know who you are, but I would ask you to leave the premises."* SOMA addressing me: *"It is your mind, your imagination, do not let yourself be dispossessed"*. The man in costume, reinforces the tone, with an operatic rock tune continues his invictive, like a crazy singer *"We are a global society where everything belongs to everyone, where precisely everyone can acquire what belongs to everyone. Do you understand me, sir? Madam?"*

LEVEL 3: DISPOSSESSION OF OUR CRITICAL MIND

A word in your mind is only a useless word that you use to think only for yourself... but the same word can become something bigger. It can generate wealth, immense wealth. What does it matter that this word no longer belongs to your mind? It becomes much more efficient when it belongs to others? Do you understand me, sir? Madam?" The pig continues to load the treadmill with words in chains, words that will fill the truck even more on the outside.

SOMA tells me *"Trademark law... Private companies have licensed our vocabulary, our culture. Every day our public cultural heritage, our common heritage, the public domain is shrinking and becoming their property alienating you even more. This territory of your mind is precious but it no longer belongs to you. We must act"*. I turn to the left, the huge stacks of books are being reduced to a mere sight. *"Let's go out"* said SOMA. I come out of the hangar and find myself in the outside space, the huge factory behind me, it keeps raining bills, but the rain has increased in intensity, we can no longer see anything.

[Live action] In the treatment room, I open my eyes, the image is blurry. I see the television, the trial over and over again. I don't know where we are. Outside our building, I hear crowds screaming. SOMA approaches my face *"I'm going to have to leave you now. You're gonna have to figure it out on your own. You must finish freeing up this last space on your own."* In the background, in the trial broadcast on television, a young teenage girl speaks: *"What do we have left? What do you have to share with us? What dreams? What utopias? What we have left to dream about is our relationship to the object, to money, to material. This is your legacy. You have hijacked our alternative culture, our critical thinking, you have bought our thinkers, our artists. What weapons do we have left? You have privatized our spirit, our language, our vocabulary, our concepts, our ideals, our ideas, our collective heritage. What do we have left? ».* Cut.

I am alone in a dark room, facing me, the young teenager in court. Images of landscapes, nature and artists are projected onto it by a video projector. I can only see the black silhouette that stands out from the image projected on her. She addresses me gently: *"What we want is culture, landscapes, art, humour, subversive, poetry, philosophy, literature, associations, local politics, free expression, social initiatives."* The projection goes out. She then approaches me and lays a book at my feet. A white paper.

[CGI Animation] I'm back in the middle of the fair facing the factory. It's still raining tickets. The light of the sky is reddish, apocalyptic. The Ferris wheel on my left. The inflatable pig in weightlessness. The loaded truck next to the factory. The high-security barrier around us. I have the book in my hand. I raise my arm and notice that a distorted guitar chord resonates (talk box sound). The action I took caused the explosion of the pig that could be swollen into a billion fine red particles. These particles float in the air. The rain of banknotes immediately stopped falling. I continue my gestures on a series of electric guitar sounds. Each of my actions explodes into billions of red particles the elements of the landscape, the truck, the elements of the high security barrier, the factory, the Ferris wheel... An explosion into billions of red particles that turn into butterflies of the same color. Little by little, the setting empties and frees itself from the presence of the concession. I multiply the gestures with the book, a wild music, a scream is played and I tear the world apart in front of me, in an interactive rock opera game. The landscape is a huge meadow, the sky is blue. A little further on, behind the site where the factory was located, I see a beach. Thousands of red butterflies fly around me.

I'm walking down the beach.

LEVEL 4: EPILOGUE / LIBERATION

I'm approaching the beach. I see that other people are flocking like me to the sandbank. You can hear the sounds of nature, birds, wind. We're moving forward. We're approaching the shore. The beach looks like a northern Europe beach. I turn around. I saw the hut of my SELF sitting in the greenery of the meadow. The chair on the outside and my SELF sitting inside. The standing lamp lit next to him. The red butterflies continue to fly through the air. Further still, behind the cabin, I see the face of my replicant brain, isolated and soothed. There are other people there on the beach. The same silhouettes that were with my SELF a few moments earlier when he turned on his light bulb. I can now see their faces. Women, men of all origins (**Other VRnauts who participated in the experience**), of all ages. They all have the white paper in hand. So do I. I approach them, an information appears: **Mary / Released on 12-05-2020 at 13:58**. She also freed her mind. Like me, she found this new space of freedom, the one that allowed me to understand and awaken. Dozens of people arrive on this beach, also liberated.

THE END



Roger Waters

INTERACTIVE NOTE

FORMAT: Relief (S3D) and CGI Animation (real time)
DURATION: 30 minutes
TYPE: Anticipation / Science Fiction
DIFFUSION: virtual reality headsets (Oculus Rift, HTC Vive)

#Interactive principle

We navigate in our own minds, to reconquer our brains infected by consumerist conditioning. In a psychedelic and phantasmagorical way, the VRnaute crosses levels of understanding that force him/her to unravel the mystery of how his/her brain was privatized, conditioned, manipulated for commercial and ideological purposes. Accompanied by SOMA, the citizen activist who infiltrated his/her mind, the VRnaute will have to cross the levels by practicing liberatory actions. The experiment ends when the VRnaute reaches the last uninfected space of freedom, which will allow him/her to become aware of the need for the collective. He/she abandons his/her consumer conditioning to be a citizen again.

#A sensory experience and a game design (level and interactive gesture)

The experience built in CGI animation (real time) will allow the VRnaute to navigate in spaces like in a video game. It is about providing a feeling of freedom, a sensory feeling of exploration that impacts the VRnaute. In this respect, *Shock The Monkey* is intended to be a strong aesthetic and sensory experience. The experience will be divided into 3 levels. Each level allows us to measure the advertising strategies of our brain conditioning; our relationship to brands. To pass from one level to the other, the VRnaute must take a "liberating" action that allows him to affirm his/her awakening from what has been revealed to him/her and thus to reconquer the infected territories of his/her brain. These gestures are the jet (to liberate), the flight (to break out of isolation) and the creative gesture (to recover the act of creation). These gestures will allow him/her to conclude each level and thus access the next. And gradually free up.

#A poetically connected experience, a collective experience

We want this experience to have a "collective" dimension. Indeed, we wish to bring our VRnaute into an end of the experience that questions him/her on the exit of individualism and leads him/her to an awareness of the collective, of collective action. Thus, our experience is connected. During the epilogue, the VRnaute reaches a beach on which he/she will see all the VRnautes who participated in the experiment and who have also reached this stage of release materialize. The number of people we will see on the beach will be the number of VRnautes in real time who managed to free themselves and participated in the experiment. The time, name and date will only appear on the character. The idea is not to propose an interaction but only in a very poetic way, to propose a space where one becomes aware of the need for the collective interest and one's place as a citizen. We will continue to explore this idea during the development to see if we can push this logic further.

#The behaviour of the VRnaute

Hybridization between “Live” sequences and “real-time” animation sequences will cause two types of behaviour for the VRnaute: passive observer behaviour (live sequences) and active player behaviour (real-time animation). The passage from the first to the second will be enjoyable for the spectator who will suddenly be able, thanks to the controllers, to navigate freely in the universe we propose. This is part of the feeling of taking possession of his/her brain that we want to bring to life. However, we will still have to study the transition from one behaviour to another in the development phase to make this break into a narrative force.

#Explore the customization of the graphic universe

We would like to explore during the development phase the possibility of exploring the customization of the experience (graphic customization, gameplay) according to the user in order to reinforce the relevance of the subject to my mind. The idea would be to be able to offer a personalized graphic universe (in part) to the viewer.

This principle is a real added value to the film. It is not yet explored. We therefore wish to work on technical solutions that increase the user’s ability to make choices in the narrative process in order to evolve in an imaginary world closer to his or her relationship to the consumer society. This obviously raises the thorny question of profiling and personal data.

We also plan to contact a research laboratory at the University of Louvain in Belgium to strengthen this aspect of the film, with which our co-producer Chloé Jarry has already had the opportunity to work.



Chloé Jarry
Producer at LUCID REALITIES

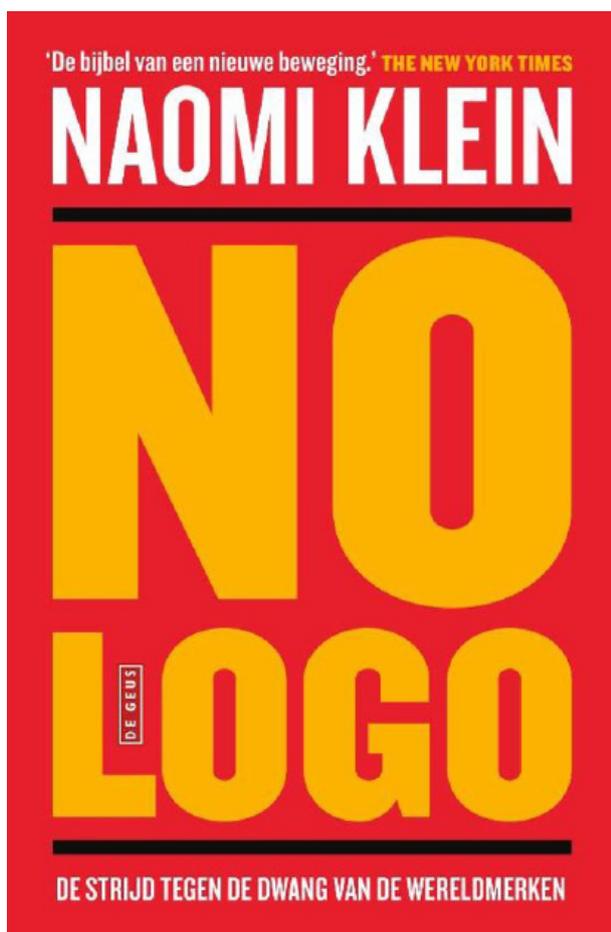
“

In the coming months, we would like to explore technical solutions to increase the user’s ability to make choices in the narrative process in order to evolve in an imaginary world closer to his relationship to the consumer society.

”

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In his famous book *NO LOGO*, Canadian essayist Naomi Klein denounces the invasion of brands in the public space. Behind the beautiful images of an ideal world sold by these brands hides a form of modern slavery, with underpaid and exploited workers. Moreover, this incursion of private interests into public spaces contributes to educating us and to making us adhere to an inseparable economic and political order, to the capitalist system, to globalization. And this, in the end, in spite of us.



Public spaces invested by the private sector (advertising, cars, etc.), private spaces operating as public spaces (shopping centres, leisure parks, airports, car parks, etc.), the boundaries between public and private spaces no longer exist, except to delimit the individual sphere and separate it from “common” spaces. Shopping centres and advertising visuals shape the landscape, which thus becomes much the same all over the world. The consumer space takes on an air of universality and reassures the user, who is thus integrated into a “global consumer society”.

The invasion of this privatization of spaces continues beyond the walls of our cities as it penetrates our brains, our thoughts, our imaginations. When advertising strategies try to target our brains to impact our memory, to trigger acts of shopping, to condition our behaviour, to influence our vision of the world, when our vocabulary is gradually privatized, when our cultural concepts are confiscated by multinationals, when silence becomes commercial and we are prevented from thinking freely, are we still free? Free to build a critical mind? To participate in the emergence of public opinion? To create a free work? These questions must now be asked.

Our alienation is no longer only physical but also mental, an alienation in favour of the functioning of a system that reduces individuals to “human capital” no longer able to think of themselves as citizens, members of a collective. It is in our minds that our last bastion of resistance is indeed in our minds. It is there, and only there, that this resistance can be built. And it is in a logic of resistance that we have considered this project. The rhetoric of the crime against humanity is therefore at this interesting level.

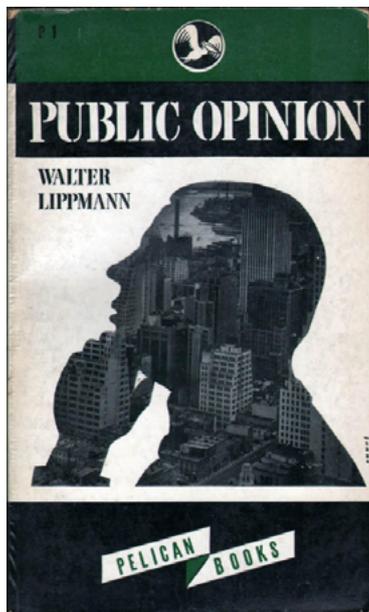
#A trial, a crime against humanity?

Many theorists, philosophers and activists are trying to measure the real impacts of advertising on individuals and society, but also on the ecology of these strategies. This fabricates consent (Walter Lippmann) for the benefit of private interests to impacts first on the individual himself who finds himself in loss of identity. *“Do you feel like everyone else? Consume this, you will be different.”*

The problem is that consumption is by definition a mass phenomenon, which homogenizes individuals. Hence this generalized sadness, which is spreading a little more and more every day and generating individual tragedies such as suicides or social exclusion. New advertising techniques based on psychological research have also made it possible to strengthen the individualistic character of our societies, by offering a unique response to this unease: consumption.

The connivance between the world of the arts and brands (of which Jeff Koons is the paragon) also has the perverse effect of disillusioning the belief we had in subversive art and therefore in our ability to produce criticism. This has led to the total killing of critical thinking, our ability to unite in the collective interest.

Political utopias die, murdered and replaced by the gregarious individualism of advertising consumption. In addition, our system of globalized growth and over-consumption causes ecological and human disasters without comparison in history. Advertising, by reassuring us in our individualism, has prevented us from acting on the new balances that our planet would have needed.



Walter Lippmann "Public Opinion"

Finally, the violation of our mind is an act of aggression in essence. The philosopher advocates the right to non-receipt of unwanted messages. Messages that often make us do what we didn't want to do. We could multiply the concrete examples to demonstrate the dramatic consequences on the world of this gentle manipulation. We are knowingly diverted from the tragedies that surround us in order to continue to support a system that some do not want to see challenged or rethought.

Thus, the idea of using the rhetoric and aesthetics of a trial was born in our minds. We believe that one day, inevitably, the time will come when the question of responsibility will have to be asked. From an ethical and moral point of view, how can this phenomenon be addressed? Is there not a direct responsibility when experts work to manipulate humans for commercial purposes?

This trial cannot be part of an immediate temporality, of course, so we decided to use anticipation to see how such an event could be part of a principle of change and future resistance. Is it not a crime against humanity to destroy millions of brains in this way for the benefit of our membership in an economic system? Don't we have an obligation to seek justice? How can we recover a space of thought free of all this mercantile pollution? Can we clear our minds, get out of this intellectual conditioning?

“

The aim is to create ill-informed consumers who will make irrational choices (...) often against their own interests. That's all advertising is for. If society does not change, we will be a society based on Adam Smith's despicable precept: "Everything for me, nothing for others".

Noam Chomsky

”

#Why an anticipation experience? Utopia or dystopia?

SHOCK THE MONKEY exposes this problem in the near future, a time in history when capitalism will be out of breath and during which the stakes of power will be redistributed. Anticipation was therefore essential to build the context of the experience and the staging raising the question of responsibility.

Our author's point of view is very clearly on the utopian side and not dystopic.

Having the tools to infiltrate our brains, to be able to purge them of consumerist conditioning and reconnect us to the collective interest is a position we defend. Exposing it in this way in the film is an opportunity for us to challenge the viewer and allow him to project himself into a positive vision, ideal of what a liberated, reconnected world could be.

We have been exposed to 3,000 ads a day since we were born. It is obvious that the consequences are not insignificant for our psyche.

#Why virtual reality?

We have been exposed to 3,000 ads a day since we were born. Under these conditions, in what state is our brain? It is obvious that the consequences are not insignificant for our psyche. Virtual reality by its immersive power was therefore the ideal medium to make this journey in our own minds. Discovering the infected areas of our brain, seeing the privatization of our imagination and then reclaiming these territories of the mind naturally lent itself to the narrative mode of virtual reality. In addition, we wanted to work more on perceptions, emotions and interactivity rather than develop a long speech. The advertising attack is insidious, so it was necessary to approach the subject in a more sensory and emotional rather than rational way.

(..) Discovering the infected areas of our brain, seeing the privatization of our imagination and then reclaiming these territories of the mind naturally lent themselves to the narrative mode of virtual reality.

#Deconstruct individuality to reconnect with the Other and the collective interest

The main consequence of advertising is to deeply strengthen our individualism and to detach ourselves from the collective interest. The system makes us consumers and no longer awake citizens. Our objective with *SHOCK THE MONKEY* is to question the VRnaut about critical thinking, freedom of thought and our need to regain public opinion, to defend a general, collective interest. Our journey takes us from the individual (his/her brain) to the collective (joining the ranks of the citizen movement). This is why, as we move through the territories we are regaining possession of, we want to awaken the VRnaut to his/her place as a citizen and no longer as a consumer. A citizen who is aware of the challenges of our society and no longer of its individuality. And which will therefore naturally end on the beach in the company of all the liberated citizens.

Thus, it is important for us to imagine this experience as an experience that leads us from the individual to the collective. Although we will try to build this awareness through "liberating" gestures that will allow the VRnaut to regain possession of his mind, we will also propose to conclude the journey with a connected collective experience. This collective interaction will only take place in the conclusion of the experience, that is, when we access the only space of freedom of our mind, that is, when we have taken the steps that have allowed me to deconstruct the privatization of my brain. It is here, on this beach, that all the players connected to *SHOCK THE MONKEY* and who have reached this release will find themselves. It is not a question of allowing everyone to interact, but simply of finding oneself here at the beginning of something new, of making a new society. We want a collective approach that is more poetic than pure interaction.

#Why the name SOMA for the main character?

“Soma” is the name of the substance given to the citizens of the world state in Aldous Huxley’s novel *Brave New World*. This substance is the secret of the cohesion of this society: thanks to it, every element of society is happy and claims nothing. Individuals of all castes are satisfied with their status whether it is at the bottom of the social scale or at the top. Through the use of this name, we wanted to show the unhealthy role of advertising in modern societies, which, like the Soma in Huxley’s novel, puts the population to sleep in a deep and false paradisiacal dream.

The main character, a resistance fighter, bears this name in a principle of opposition.

#Why SHOCK THE MONKEY?

The title is a nod to Peter Gabriel’s famous eponymous song. It evokes the need to awaken in us our deepest instinct, the one that has not yet been conditioned by the manoeuvres of the modern world. The monkey’s symbolism is twofold: a representation of the “primitive” and at the same time a symbol of evolution, of humanity. So we are monkeys conditioned to the modern world. But it is his wisdom that we want to find again. The need to do a “reset”, start from scratch with a real connection to human nature.

*The experience allows us
to regain our spirit.
The film leads us
to liberation through
a poetic and sensitive
approach.
We will work with
the authors in the
coming months
to reinforce this graphic
and emotional evolution
in the narrative.*



Marion GUTH
Producer at a_BAHN

REALIZATION AND ARTISTIC NOTE

SHOCK THE MONKEY is a VR experience of anticipation. Utopian and poetic, we want to create a strong aesthetic and emotional experience. The emotional evolution of the experience will take us from great oppression to a sense of total freedom and poetry. From the very first minutes we want to immerse the spectator in the heart of the subject, while formally and actively integrating it into the narrative framework. That's why we're starting the film with the kidnapping and uproar of social movements.

SHOCK THE MONKEY combines two techniques: live shooting (Alexa Omnicam) and CGI real-time animation (Zeilt Productions). This hybridization will allow us to play between moments of reality and psychedelic moments. The live shooting will be for reality scenes and the CGI for surrealist sequences in our brain. It is obvious that this hybridization will cause a disruption in the user's behaviour. More passive in Live sequences, more active in real-time sequences. In the coming months, we will work to make this breakup a narrative force to stage the idea of liberation and regain control of one's mind.

Our project combines influences as diverse as Pink Floyd's *The Wall* with this live + animation hybridization and the incredible artistic direction of British graphic designer Gerald Scarfe. The work *Animals* by the same band has been inspiring in terms of its political and creative universe. From a graphic point of view, we are also inspired by short *Logorama* that won an Oscar in 2009. The way in which the universe of brands and logos is exploited and extended over a global universe is very inspiring and will guide us in the graphic creation and staging of the film. We also think that surrealism is an exciting solution to staging the way advertising affects our psyche. Let us recall the strong and historical history that links advertising and the birth of psychoanalysis. Edouard Bernays, the father of advertising propaganda, was Sigmund Freud's double nephew. Many sequences will have colourful, cynical, allegorical characters. We wish to take up phantasmagorical forms such as those found in what allows us to plunge the VRnaut into his subject in an eloquent way, with a certain oppression.

We plan to collaborate with the Luxembourg artist Anne Mélan who imagines very inspired surrealist worlds. Surrealism is of course one of our main pictorial references.

From the point of view of live shooting, our main reference is Michel Gondry and his "hand-made" approach to decoration. The way he staged the journey in Jim Carrey's memory in *The Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* with its strong directional lights and prefabricated sets. Concerning the universe of anticipation, we appreciate the aesthetics of Alfonso Cuarón's *Sons of Man* and this mixture of ultra-realistic social and totalitarian realism. We can also mention Terry Gilliam's work and in particular his anticipatory film *Brazil*.

The user's behavioural break between live (passive) and real-time (active) animation sequences will be exploited in the narrative to reinforce the idea of liberation and regain control of his/her mind.

Chloé JARRY
Producer
LUCID REALITIES



Another important reference, both pictorial and conceptual and musical, is the clip of Peter Gabriel's title *Shock The Monkey* (inspired by *Blade Runner's* cinematography).

In terms of literature, our inspiration comes of course from *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, the works of Marcuse, Noam Chomsky, Naomie Klein, Guy Debord or the novel *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis and novels of anticipation such as *Brave New World* by Huxley, *1984* by Orwell and *We* by Zamiatine.

All these inspirations will allow us to imagine the graphic and sound design in the coming months of development.

SHOCK THE MONKEY is a VR experience which leads us to navigate in our own brains, a surrealist, poetic, militant, aesthetic and cinematographic journey. So there is no question of reproducing the aesthetics of a brain, of having a "medical" approach. We wish to navigate in our minds as we would navigate in a painting by Salvador Dali, in the universe of the short film *Logorama* or in an animation of *The Wall...* in a work of political surrealism tinged with

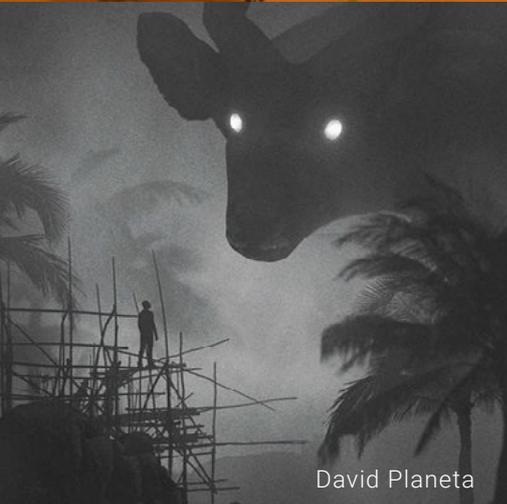
the universe of brands...

From the very first minutes
we want to immerse
the spectator in the heart
of the subject, while formally
and actively integrating it
into the narrative framework.





Apple 1984



David Planeta



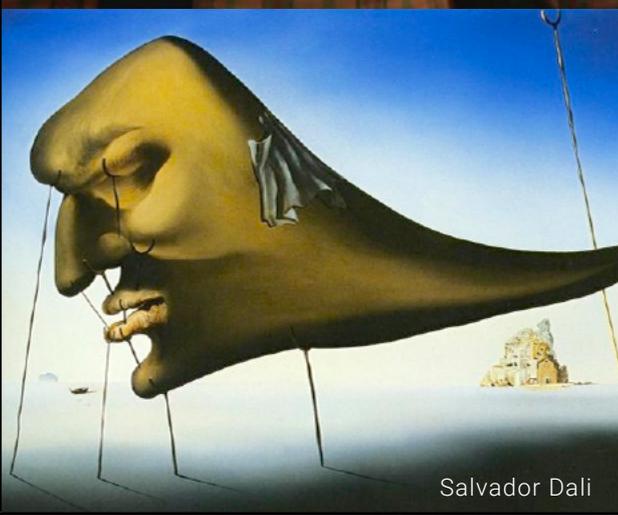
Michel Gondry



Gabriel Scarfe



Logorama



Salvador Dali



Yue Minjun



Salvador Dali



Gabriel Scarfe

NEXT STEPS

September, 2018 to February, 2019

Project writing and memorandum of intent
Submission of the Film Fund Luxembourg writing aid
First research / Archives
Meeting with ZEILT PRODUCTIONS team for the interactive and gaming part

March/April, 2019

Meetings with French, Canadian and Argentinean producers / distributors, including ARTE France
Set up of technical specifications for the gaming part
Find the right Concept Artist

April/May, 2019

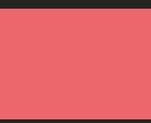
Elaboration of graphic specifications

June/July, 2019

Submission to the CNC New Media writing aid
Research studies
Writing and interactive design
Elaboration of the tree structure
Developed interactive synopsis writing
First visual research
Expertises: algorithms, video archives

August/December, 2019: Development

Submission to the Film Fund Luxembourg development aid
Submission to the CNC New Media development aid



CONTACT

MARION GUTH
marion@a-bahn.com
+352 661 163 820

FRANÇOIS LE GALL
francois@a-bahn.com

a_BAHN
115a rue Emile Mark
L4620 Differdange
LUXEMBOURG

