

IN MEMORIAM

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>universe

The game universe is the serial killer's CD-Rom, which is the puzzle the player has to crack. What inspired you when creating it?

To start with, we worked with Etienne Mineur to define the Phoenix's style, working from boards designed like style books. As for inspiration, we immediately thought of the credit titles to *Seven*, created by Kyle Cooper, and the work of Vaughan Oliver and Joel Peter Witkin. I guess authors like Connelly, Dantec and Grangé were also important in the research phase. In the end, the serial killer's style is a blend of influences drawn from literature, photography and the cinema. It's a fusion of several elements: photos of materials, places and bodies – and also drawings. For some screens, I asked an illustrator to produce sketches inspired by old engravings. For others, we simply recreated the illustrations we found in magical texts. Lastly, some of the elements were produced in 3D: strange insects, for example, which give the game a strikingly realistic appearance.

How is the CD-Rom put together?

The Phoenix's universe is the main element. It's arranged around a deliberately astonishing interface – a sort of mobile living organism, or strange liquid, which provides access to the different game screens. Sometimes animations of murder scenes or transitional episodes are inserted. These required a huge amount of work involving specific photographic and filming sessions, editing with textural effects, etc. Grafted onto this main interface is the CD-Rom's general interface, created by Jack's agency, in addition to another part created by a hacker. The CD-Rom's made up of several levels, linked to the four elements: water, air, earth and fire. So I worked with the predominant colors and materials appropriate to each level.

Is the CD-Rom simply built up out of puzzles and mysteries?

No – and that's one of the qualities of this game. What Eric wanted was to create a sense of rhythm with a wide variety of gameplays, inserted enigma phases – decoding messages, puzzles, and so on – with surprising sleights of hand and mini-games, all interspersed with investigations on the Net and several films. For me, the really difficult thing was to make all these disparate graphic elements cohere in the killer's universe.

What did you have to do to ensure that the player doesn't get tired of this unique universe?

It's true that, on the CD-Rom, you're always in the killer's universe. You might think that would be wearisome, but several things are there to stop the player getting bored. First of all, the CD-Rom evolves as you go along – I mentioned the four elements, which provide new tactile, visual and acoustic sensations. There are also the e-mails you receive which draw your attention to one particular detail after another. The time spent investigating on the Internet makes you aware of facts linked to the inquiry: the victims' private diaries, historical sites, etc. Lastly, the films intersperse the screens and add greater sensory variety, with new landscapes, and sensuality.

