Just believe

(Il suffit d'y croire)

solo show by Martin Le Chevallier

press folder

Martin Le Chevallier / **Just believe** (Il suffit d'y croire)

Exhibition : 13th January - 12th March 2005
Private view : Wednesday 12th January, 14-21 pm

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"Just believe" (Il suffit d'y croire) is the first solo show by Martin Le Chevallier. A selection of his works is being presented, all based on the idea of belief. We could thus believe in fulfilment in the work thanks to the CD-Rom *Gageure 1.0*, believe in social control with the video surveillance game *Vigilance 1.0*, believe in collective happiness with the interactive video *Bliss (Félicité)*, believe in the security ideal with the video *Safe Society*, believe in the virtues of consumption with the vocal telephone server *Doro bibloc* and, have trouble believing it in the interactive video *Oblomov* or believe in everything successively with *Le Papillon* (*The Butterfly*).

Le Papillon, his new interactive video, featuring Mathieu Amalric, describes the journey through life of a character seeking accomplishment. When this character achieves his aim, the film settles into a lasting tranquillity, a happy ending without end, nice for the character perhaps, but sooner or later boring for viewers. To escape boredom, viewers have the possibility of interrupting the existential choices of the character. They can thus, by plunging their hero into the chaos of fiction, vicariously savour a multitude of lives.

Le Papillon has been produced by Camera Lucida Productions, with the help of the ministère de la Culture et de la Communication (Dicream) and the Drac Ile-de-France.

Presented in the exhibition in the form of an installation, *Le Papillon* will be available for free downloading from February 1st 2005 on www.galerie-maisonneuve.com and www.martinlechevallier.net

Martin Le Chevallier offers critical and ironic representations of our époque through the means of the tools that characterise it. From video-games to telephone servers, from CD-Rom to interactive video, these representations are experiences that viewers are invited to undergo by participating in certain apparatus, the constraints of which express contemporary ideologies. These set-ups sometimes arise from diversions (false video-games, false telephone servers, false advertising slogans, etc.) and sometimes from formal invention, notably when, through the intervention of interactivity, viewers reexplore cinematic narration. A reflection on the position of viewers is expressed through these experiences that he offers us. Whether they be a player, a guinea pig, a security guard, a walker or an executioner, the role that is assigned to viewers serves the purposes of the artist.

Martin Le Chevallier / **Biography**

Born in May 1968 in Fontenay aux Roses (France), Martin Le Chevallier lives and works in Paris.

After having worked as a graphic artist, from 1996 he started personal artistic research concerning political and social issues. His research first resulted in posters being posted illegally, then in the CD-Rom *Wager 1.0* (*Gageure 1.0*, 1999), a labyrinthine denunciation of the business discourse. Afterwards, he made *Flirt 1.0* (2000), a game of seduction made up of extracts from classical American movies, and a video surveillance game, *Vigilance 1.0* (2001). From October 2000 to September 2001, he was resident at the French Academy in Rome where he devoted himself to the evocation of an utopian society through the interactive film *Bliss* (*Félicité*). This "praise of inactivity" led to the conception of another interactive film, *0blomov* (2001), in which he juxtaposed the main character,s apathy with viewers's impatience. He again explored this method in *One minute of silence* (*Une minute de silence*, 2003), an apparatus that offers a journey in the thoughts and the perception processes of a group of people gathered after September the 11th, conceived in collaboration with the writer Tiphaine Samoyault. In 2003, he created two new critical projects : *Safe Society*, a video parodying the security ideology and *Dial star*, a phone server dedicated to our urges to consume. In 2004 he set up the existential turnaround of *The Butterfly* (*Le Papillon*, 2005), his new interactive video that will be at the heart of the exhibition "Just believe".

Martin Le Chevallier / **Exhibitions**

– «A quoi rêvent les années 90?», exhibition organized by Jean-Charles Masséra, from April 25 to June 30 1998, in the centre d'art moderne Mira Phalaina in Montreuil (France);
– «Playtimes», exhibition organized by students of l'école du Magasin, from January 16 to February 6 1999, in the École Supérieure d' Art de Grenoble (France);
– «Le temps libre, son imaginaire, ses aménagements, ses trucs pour s'en sortir», exhibition organized by Jean-Charles Masséra, from the 21st to the 29th of May 1999, in Deauville (France);
– «Joint venture», exhibition organized by A.T. Kearney and Beaux-Arts magazine, from September 29 to October 10 1999, in Neuilly (France);
– «Dial 33 then 1», demonstration organized by Cristina Ricupero, in September 2000, in the Kiasma Museum in Helsinki;
– «Connivence», Biennale de Lyon (France), from June 22 to September 23 2001.
– «Art & Economy», exhibition organized by the Deichtorhallen Hamburg and the Siemens Kulturprogramm, from February 28 to June 23 2002, in Hambourg (Germany).
– «Big Torino 2002», Biennal of Turin (Italy), from April 19 to May 19 2002;
– «Tutto Normale», exhibition organized by Jérôme Sans, from June 21 to august 20 2002, in the Villa Medici in Rome.
– «Northern Fundamentalism», exhibition organized by Charlottenborg Exhibition Building, Copenhagen and NIFCA (Nordic Institute of Contemporary Art, Helsinki). Curators: Lars Bang Larsen, Cristina Ricupero and Charlotte Brandt. From October 31 to December 8 2002.
– "Écritures numériques, Figures et miroirs de l'Autre", show organized by the École régionale des beaux-Arts de Valence, from November 29 to December 3 2002.
– «Art Digital Vidéo», travelling exhibition organized by the Afaa (foreign ministry association for arts), from 2003.
– Exhibition in the Maisonneuve gallery, from September 10 to October 31 2003, in Paris.
– Interactive gallery of the "Némo" festival, from the 9th to the 12th of march 2004, in Paris.
– "BananaRAM", from the 6th to the 11th of June 2004 in Ancona (Italy).
– "Liste 04, The Young Art Fair", from the 15th to the 20th of June 2004, in Basel (Switzerland).
– «Common property», 6th Werkleitz Biennale, in the Volkspark Halle(Saale), from the 1st to the 5th of september 2004, in Berlin.
– "Game Time", exhibition organized by Isabelle Arvers et Antoanetta Ivanova, from the 1st to the 15th of October 2004, in the State library of Victoria, in Melbourne (Australia).
– "Games with an agenda", exhibition organized by Gonzalo Frasca and Ian Bogost in the Curzon Soho, from October 16 to November 7 2004, in London.
– "Just believe" ("Il suffit d'y croire"), personal exhibition in the Maisonneuve gallery, from January 13 to March 2005, in Paris.
– «GameScenes», exhibition in the «Piemonte Share Festival», from February 25 to March 1 2005, in Torino (Italy).
– "Populism", exhibition organized by Lars Bang Larsen, Cristina Ricupero and Nicolaus Schafhausen, in the Contemporary Art Center, from April 8 to June 5 2005 in Vilnius, in the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, from April 15 to September 4 2005, in Oslo, in the Stedelijk Museum, from April to September 4 2005, in Amsterdam, and in the Frankfurter Kunstverein from May 10 to September 4 2005 in Francfort (Germany) .
– exhibition of Oblomov, in June 2005, in the Goncharov Museum in Ulianovsk (Russia).

Martin Le Chevallier's works are in the following collections:

– Bibliothèque nationale de France;
– collection d'art contemporain du territoire de Belfort;
– Fond municipal d'Art contemporain de la ville de Paris;
– Fond national d'Art contemporain (Fnac);
– Musée national d'Art moderne (centre Georges Pompidou);
– private collections.

Works shown in the exhibition «Just believe» :

Le Papillon, interactive vidéo, 2005

Doro bibloc, Interactive vocal server, 2003

Safe Society, video, 2003

Oblomov, interactive vidéo, 2001

Félicité, interactive vidéo, 2001-2002

Vigilance 1.0, video-surveillance game, 2001

Gageure 1.0, cdrom, 1999

The Butterfly (Le Papillon)
interactive video by Martin Le Chevallier
wih Mathieu Amalric
© Camera Lucida Productions 2005

The Butterfly tells the story of a search for happiness. Each time the character reaches his goal, the film continues but the action stops. To the lulling sound of a tranquil musical score, viewers watch the animated picture of a never-ending happy ending. This seems to suit the character well enough but it may soon become boring for the viewers. They in turn have the possibility of escaping this boredom by triggering action, whereupon the character reassesses his life and sets out in search of something new: he becomes a politician, a priest, a vagabond, and so on.

The Butterfly has the stylized form of a fable. There is no speaking but there is a soundtrack. The occasional dialogue is presented through intertitles, while sounds are an integral part of the narrative. At the end of each episode, viewers can intervene at leisure, plunging their hero again and again into the disruption of fiction for the vicarious experience of elation that comes with change.

The Butterfly (Le Papillon)

Doro Bibloc
Interactive vocal server

At a time when telemarketing has replaced doorstep selling in private life intrusion, interactive vocal servers make gradually all real human contact disappear from our telephone manners.

Putting together these two phenomena, *Doro Bibloc* suggests a way for you to get reconciled with your own consumer status. A suave and cheerful voice on the phone will try and help you deal with your compulsion to buy, live better your overindebtedness or take an active part in the economic rebirth.

Doro Bibloc is currently shown as an installation.

Another version, which is accessible with a phone call will be available shortly.

A third version, which will involve getting in touch directly with a panel of selected people is also in progress. For example, telephone numbers of telesale centers will be massively called in order to create a healthy and absurd counter-attack.

Safe society
Video, 1 min 50', 2003

It's within an advertising time frame that the key concepts of a new security world are displayed. Low-fat butter, alcohol-free whiskey, non-lethal weapons… The right to be protected associated with the ban of putting oneself in danger thus carefully opens the way to zero-risk. Indemnified disasters, limited responsibilities, desalienated work… The video game images, which are often more dynamic and spectacular than their movie models mix daily and extraordinary events. Caffeine-free coffee, guilty-free exploitation, killed-free war. Safe society, coming soon!

Oblomov
Interactive silent video, 2001

The character is alone and still. As long as the spectator doesn't do anything, he stays indefinitely motionless, thinking or sleeping. When the spectator acts on the film («clicks»), the character does something. He gets up, answers the phone, smokes a cigarette, etc. As soon as he has finished his task, he goes back to his contemplative mood, until the spectator clicks again.

This project has been realized by using a technical process able to last a brief moment of a video sequence as long as the spectator doesn't act on it. An indefinitely moving foliage, an always spouting fountain, a still sleeping character, etc. Life seems going on. The intervention (the «click») of the spectator is like that of the videogame player who leads his character. The main difference, which is essential, is that here the spectator doesn't act on a artificially multidimensional «reality» but on a reality captured by the photography. That way, he feels that he really acts on the reality : he really wakes up the sleeping character or pressures the inactive man.

This film is freely inspired by the character created by Ivan Goncharov. The viewer has to cope with someone whose natural inclination is to do nothing. His/her only choice is then to respect or not the character's tranquility. Unaware of the action he/she triggered, the impulse isn't, as in video games "do this, do that" but only "do something!". The character then moves, as if moved by guilt or just a simple «why not?». After a while he inevitably finds himself in a meditative or sleepy mood, as is relieved by the inner question: "what's the point?" The viewer is thus sent back to other questions: "what's the point to click?" or "what's the point of my action?" or "what's the point of interactivity?"

Bliss (Félicité)
Interactive video, 2001-2002

Bliss is a documentary on a society which does not exist. An ideal society
which borrows from other, virtual or real, mythical or utopian. It is a universe of
abundance, pleasure and game, made possible by necessary abolitions: those
of the servitude, the property, the religion, the work, the family, etc. It is a film
whose pages we can turn one after the other. The reader meets a happy time there,
indeterminate. And he is free to take his own, or not, he can stretch the duration
or interrupt it. At first sight our time seems absent in these bucolic images. But in
reality it's sub-conscious, hidden, inverted.

Vigilance 1.0
Video surveillance game, 2001

The player faces a series of screens allowing him to watch over many places in the same time : streets, supermarkets, parking lots, shops, apartment buildings, schools, etc. Denouncement is his aim. In a limited time (his work time), he has to point out the most important amount of infractions : robberies, pocket-pickings, burglaries, shop-lifts, breaches of the highway code, trash-abandoning, drug dealing, solicitation on a public place, procuring, drunkenness, sexual harassment, adultery, incest, pedophilia, zoophilia, necrophilia, etc. Each time the player catch one in the act, his points increase ; each time he defames, they lower. Each citizen being a virtual offender, all unpunished infractions increase the rate of amorality of the society. A mere vigilance would lead to a moral purification, and back to the spirit of effort, family, solidarity. An inadequate vigilance would necessarily plunge the population into chaos and depravity.

Prevented from using his critical sense by the lure of success, the player faces a double bind : while he still plays the part of the unrelenting lover of justice, he becomes conscious that to play the game is in a way to play against the discourse of the game. At the end, the denunciation of a controlled society, the total visibility and spying, puts him in a position of self-denunciation.

Wager 1.0 (Gageure 1.0)
Cdrom, 1999

Wager 1.0 is an existence simulator. It allows you, at least for a little while, to forget the fear of emptiness we all share. You will momentarily feel you exist, you will feel fulfilled, you will be someone. And the recipe is simple: just believe in your work.

This metaphor takes the form of a CD Rom. Why? Dilbert provides the answer in a question: «But how did we ever pretend to work before the computer?» Today, two out of three salaried employees sit behind computers, which have become the industrial tool par excellence. So when you consult *Wager 1.0*, it will look like you're working. And you are going to play with an employer who is at once anonymous, unpredictable and inflexible: the computer.

The machine addresses us directly. It promises professional and personal enrichment. This promise is a form of propaganda. It is the propaganda of contemporary capitalism: management-speak. This language guarantees the centrality of work. It reassures us with a jargon of motivational euphemisms, and invites us to conform to its models of success.

The promised success never comes. First confronted with the simulacrum of a job interview, ignorant of what the machine holds in store, we slowly discover the labyrinthine structure of *Wager 1.0*. Players of games as alienating as work or consumption, spectators of the eternal imagery of happiness, we can only acknowledge the vanity of our dreams of fulfillment.