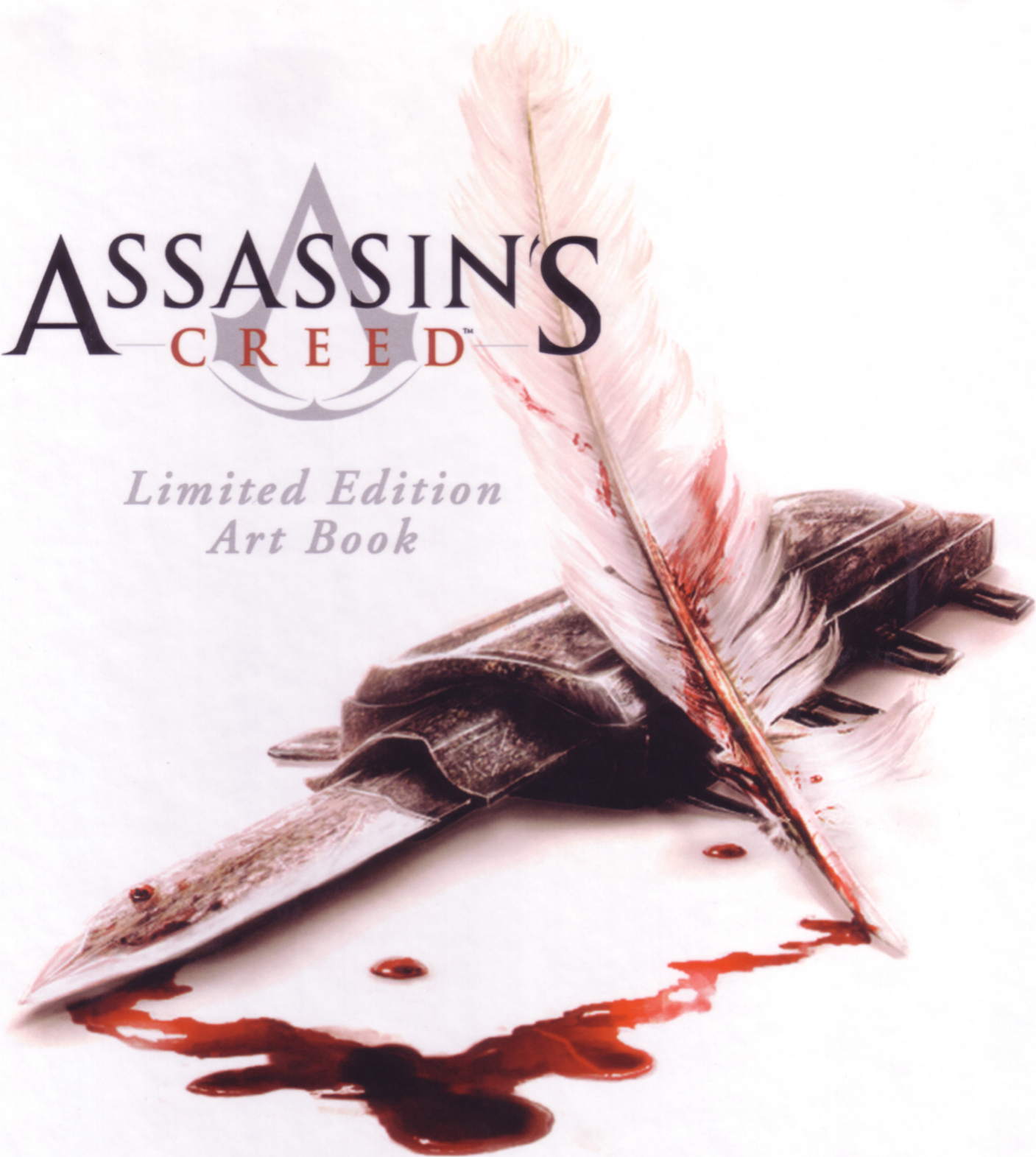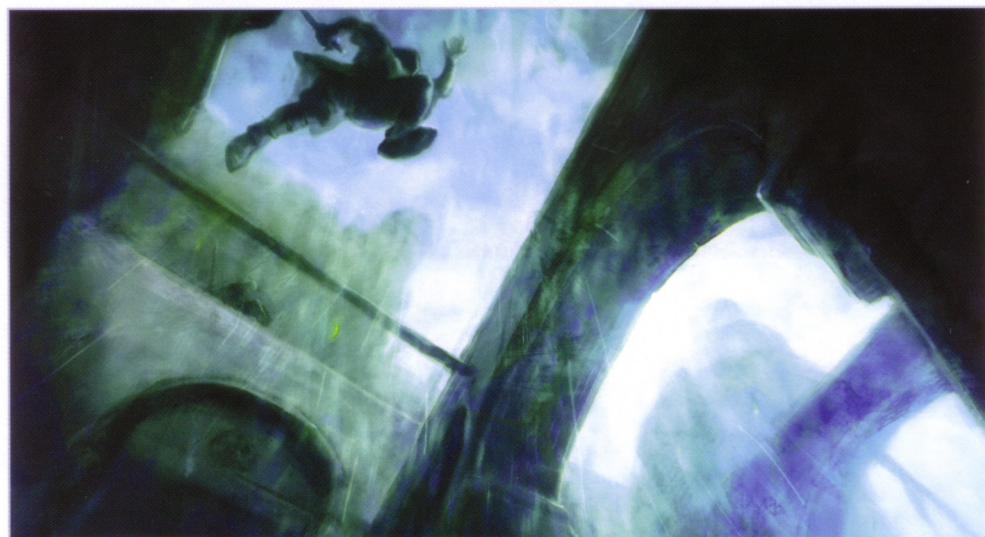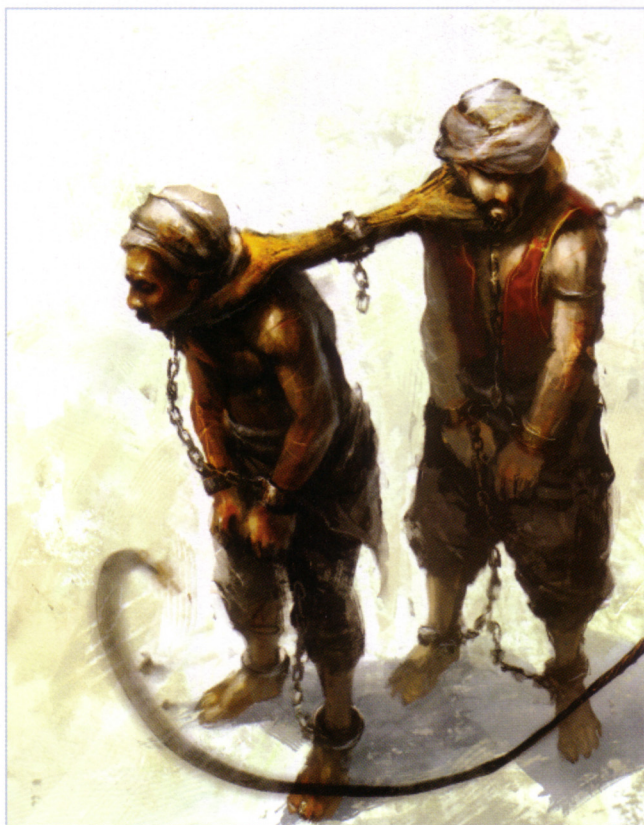# ASSASSIN'S CREED™

Limited Edition
Art Book

David Chateauneuf (Level Design Director): Everybody on this team, at first, was not sure where we were going. I mean, what's a game where we can climb everything, what's the purpose? He's an assassin, but OK, but what does he do? Finally, something happened, and every piece slotted into place.

DANCER

Raphael Lacoste (Art Director): We had different concepts; we had maybe three, four different phases for the main character. The first one that was maybe more classical; the *Sands of Time* team worked on the concept, so maybe it was too close to *Sands of Time*'s character design, it was maybe more romantic, more...Arabian Nights? Then it went more and more edgy and stylized, so...the character had first maybe too much fabric, was too round and then it became more edgy, more stylized...I think thinner also. We made the parallel with the bird of prey.

So first it was more like a knight, then after, we used a very specific style for him, made the parallel between the bird of prey, jumping on his prey. The reference to the eagle and the main character is one of the coolest aspects. You have the beak of the eagle, you see it in the hood. In the cape, you can also find, in some animations, the stylization of the wings, and these subtle elements.

3 PARTS BLADE FOLDING
MECHANISM (SPRING SYSTEM)

RING TO ACTIVATE THE BLADE
OPENING/CLOSING SYSTEM

ssassinate
n a guy,
d assas-
ence, when
th that all
that feel of
playing a

er, not like
well as
personal

Alex Drouin (Animation Director): I put more effort into Desmond's idling animations but animators never know what's going to make it in the end. We did a lot of stuff for this one. We like to have our character evolve through the game, through the idles; it's a habit that we have. You've played *Sands of Time*? I don't know if you've seen it, nobody sees that because you have to let [the game] go a minute, wait to have the animation start. But all the animations are changing through the game. The character at the beginning was really nervous, well, really cocky, then really nervous, then at the end he was really confident. And we tried to do that a little bit with Desmond at the beginning and the end.

Patrice Desilets (Creative Director): The first NPCs we created... I think we started with the knights, I remember we had a fishmonger for a while. In pre-prod, we had maybe 15 to 20 different NPCs, and then we tried to nail down as quickly as possible the main NPCs, so Al Mualim, your mentor, was created pretty early on. At the beginning he had an owl on his shoulder, but that was cut.

Raphael Lacoste (Art Director):
We worked in very high resolution before we downgraded the pictures and the modeling and made the high-res modeling in normal mapping. We can start with a 500,000 or maybe 1 million polygon character, and we end with 3,000, maybe 4,000 polygons.

Because you can really keep the aspect of the high-res character with the normal mapping, the image will keep the details of the chain mail, for example, and elements like the folds in the fabric and all that sort of detail, as long as you add dynamic lighting.

aude Langlais (Technical Director): We actually have some control on the different C templates for heads and outfit types. We figured information like 'this type of character going to have this probability of spawning, this kind of head', and so on, and it generates em on the fly. The funny thing is that you can get to see some people from the project ere, that we photographed to serve as a template for the characters. We can actually kill ople on the project in the game [laughs], which is kind of weird.

Patrice Desilets (Creative Director):
We worked on all the game mechanics in parallel, so there were people in charge of all the interaction between the 3-D static world. There's a team in charge of the crowd behavior alone, but also then someone in charge of Altair going into that crowd, and there's the team in charge of the fighting, and people in charge of horse interaction. Those were our four different behavior teams.

At the beginning, when you started a fight in a crowd, we had to come up with a way of making sure the fight would fit and how the crowd would react to the fight. But that was really our biggest challenge; to make sure that all those behaviors fit well together. The player has the freedom to experiment with all of this. Maybe some players will be mostly a fighter—they'll fight everybody there is to fight—and that's okay. We won't punish the player for doing so. Another one will be a social assassin. It's possible to go and have no fight whatsoever, and there's even an achievement where we give you a reward if you only kill your targets. It's pretty difficult, but it's doable.
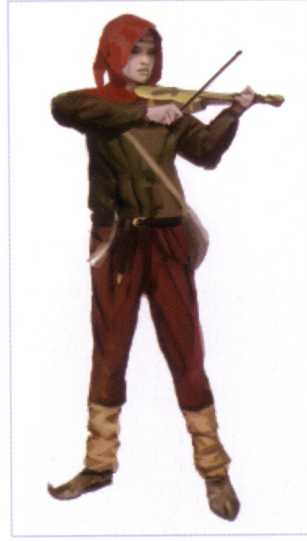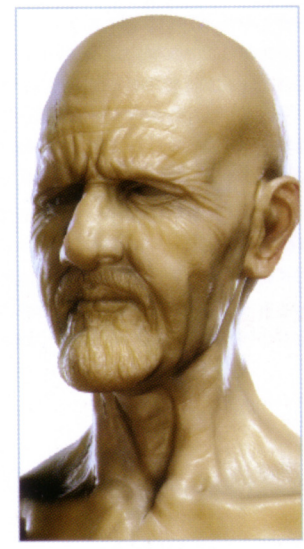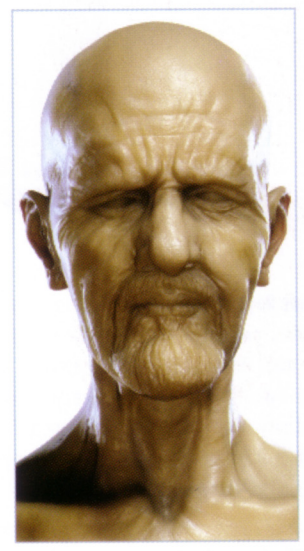
Jade Raymond (Producer): The clothing was relatively easy to research because there are quite a few sources. You can find the clothes in history books. The thing that's interesting is, we made all this stuff historically accurate, and then what we found is that people's clothes didn't vary that much. It wasn't like...you know, back in the day, there wasn't like a Gap, the punk store, and then the goth store, and then the hip hop style. It was medieval days. People didn't have that much money, unless you're a king, and people pretty much walked around wearing variations on a brown sack of potatoes with tights.

What we noticed is that while we have these cities with hundreds of people, but if we did 100% historical accuracy, you wouldn't see as much variety in the crowd as you would like to see as a player. So we actually put more variety in the color of the clothes, and more variety in the types of accessories and stuff like that, and tended a little bit more toward the richer outfits, so we could get that variety. We wanted to stay historically accurate. For example, you'll see the women carrying vases on their heads. From far away, they may kind of look like they're all the same, because that's what people wore, but then when you get up close and you'll see that they all have different faces.

We tried to keep a compromise with being accurate while still giving a variety that kept the crowd interesting to people. It falls into a lot of subtle detail. It's not like, "Oh, this guy is this or that type," because it had to be realistic, but we did push a little bit in terms of maybe there are more people wearing richer clothing that people wouldn't really have been able to afford. Then you have to look at people's faces to really appreciate the variety.

Alex Drouin (Animation Director):
Basically, what we wanted to do at the beginning, and one mistake we had in *Sands of Time*, was that the Prince looked really nice but the NPCs were a bit dumb. So we said, let's generate one skeleton, maybe being able to scale it to have different sizes of character, and create behavior on that generic skeleton, which is Altair. They all share the same AI and the same behaviors, so technically, whatever Altair can do, any NPC in the game can do. It's the same behavior, it's the same animation. We just had to work at replacing some of the animation. There's some stuff in the game that looks a little weird because we didn't have time to replace the Altair animation, so the NPCs move like him in some of the behaviors. It's the name of the game; you can't do it all.

BEDUIN
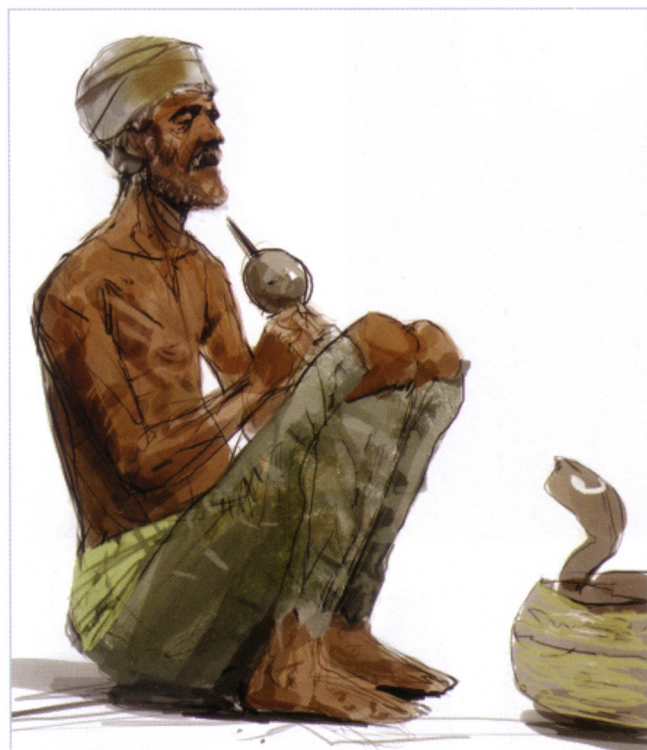
Claude Langlais (Technical Director): It's really a challenge to simulate different humans, so getting it—I don't want to say accurate—but believable, or so that [the player] can feel that the NPCs in the city kind of react like humans might possibly; that's a huge challenge.

The first part that we solved pretty quickly was being able to interact with everything that you see. That was one of the first things we did as a prototype, was really grabbing onto pretty much everything that you see, so building the detections and generating the collisions and information for that, that was done pretty early. We cleared it out of the way pretty early. The AI and the crowd, that was much harder to nail down because it's hard to build something that's intelligent enough but still serves the purpose of game design, creating a whole city that "lives" but at the same time serves to help you go through the game.

**David Chateauneuf
(Level Design Director):** I wanted to have the possibility to create some bottleneck by putting a kiosk with a lot of people in front of it, so when you go there, you can see there's a bottleneck, then you have to jump the chaos. I always wanted to have a jar-carrier. Somebody's holding it and you have to put your hand on them to make sure it's not going to fall.

If the player's running, what are the ingredients that the player is going to encounter and be challenged by? We had the small harasser, like the woman who is running at you and you always bump her in that way, so if there's a guard that's aware, you are going to be detected. And

then [there is] the drunk guy for sure, and that's at a place where there's water, so he can throw you in the water. Or there's a jar-carrier. She can bump you so you fall on the jar-carrier and then he reacts and then the guard [sees].

So it was something that we wanted to create and finding the mix between the interacting elements and the pure life, so we had to create a mix, and we did that by having something specific that looks like it's part of the crowd, but has its own specific routines, while the crowd acts without the need for specific level design elements that would have taken too long to implement.

**David Chateauneuf
(Level Design Director):** We decided to make the Templars, at some point, the enemy of the Assassins. But they are not really your enemy, because at the end you see that it's not the big surprise. But the Templars, during the whole game, you can find them protecting their treasures. That was a small idea that we had because we just wanted to put the Templars at some other place in the city [for the player] to collect all them and have some free assassination to do.
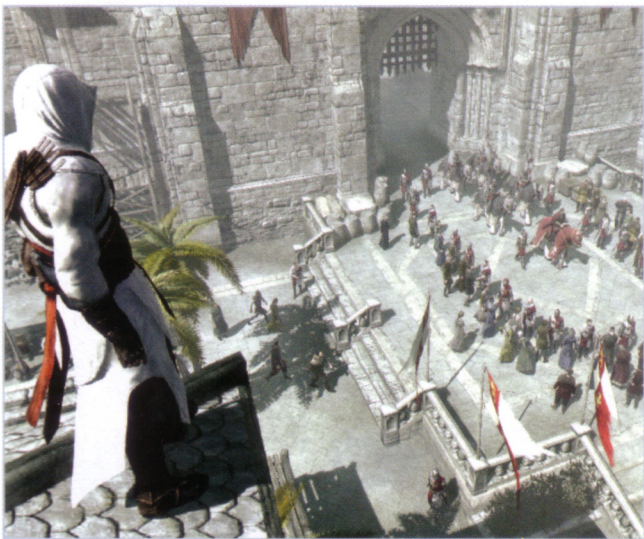
Raphael Lacoste (Art Director): The way we designed the Saracens: All the weapons have been designed after those in historical books. But we didn't keep the real designs of the fabric because it was looking like...sometimes it's very saturated and very...they look very kitsch. So we made that a little less saturated and did something maybe more interesting for the shape, the silhouette, make them more...a way of trying to make the design more dramatic, more interesting.
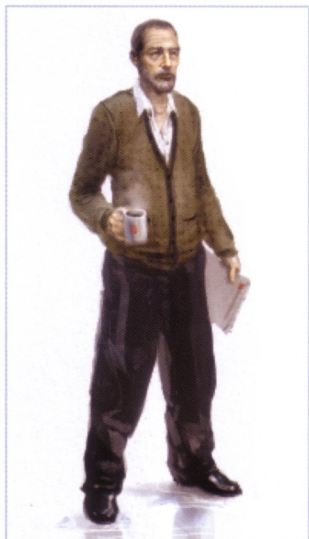
Patrice Desilets (Creative Director):
My favorite character is the merchant king, Abu'l Nuqoud. We call him, affectionately, our "she-male." You know, it's fun to put a target like that in the game. I like him. The big party. Everybody's drinking, then everybody's dying and then you've got to go and reach him and kill him from behind.

Jade Raymond (Producer): We strove for accuracy, even for the guys that you assassinate. We had Conrad of Montferrat at first in our game. Then when we did research into the specific year 1191, we found out he was actually killed mysteriously, but it wasn't in 1191. So then we decided; "Oh, we can't put him in our game," because we didn't want to have a guy who didn't actually die in that year as one of the guys you kill, because we wanted it to be historically plausible. So, then we found out that William, who was related to Conrad, was actually in Acre in 1191. So then we thought, "Oh cool, we'll stick William there instead." So, we actually did go into quite a bit of detail.

Patrice Desilets (Creative Director):
I also love Sibrand, the German knight. He thinks everybody is an assassin because he's pretty late in the game and he knows that an assassin is attempting to kill the Templars, and since he's one of them, he's like, "He's coming, he's coming!" And it's all in the port area. The port area of Acre is pretty amazing. I also love the Templars. When Templars find you and they start fighting, and you're beckoned into a duel, it's a different vibe to the game.

David Chateauneuf

(Level Design Director): I love Jubair's mission. There's something special about it because there's a big crowd around him. You've got plenty of archers on the rooftops and stuff. There's something special. You feel like it's not just like, OK, let's do the mission. You have to jump, sneak, remain in hiding. You don't just kill all the enemies. No, you're in the middle of the crowd. There's a big guy on the stage. Great stuff!

Raphael Lacoste (Art Director): First we thought to use a very clean, plastic, white and reflective environment. Finally the best idea was to take a different orientation, and we used a mix of concrete, neons and glass. The lab is finally darker than the original concept and light is taking a more important part in the look of the place.