

# ❧ Latus Island ❧

(WT)



EXPOSÉ

Steampunk Mindfuck Drama.

Live Action, 120 min.

by Martin Wallner

11.08.2012



*«Sing then the core of dark and absolute oblivion  
where the soul at last is lost in utter peace.»*

D.H. Lawrence

Coma patient Oscar Bay is a prisoner of his own head.

Unaware of this, he lives in his own imagination. In order to find his way  
back to reality he must confront himself with his deepest fears.

**Martin Wallner**

Dancing Squirrel  
Alte Gasse 22  
86152 Augsburg  
Germany

Telefon: +49-176-20 83 97 44  
Mail: [m.wallner@dancing-squirrel.com](mailto:m.wallner@dancing-squirrel.com)



## Exposé

### Oscar

Oscar Bay lives together with his daughter Lena on Lotus Island, a lovely spot somewhere in the Mediterranean. Its residents are a cheerful and laid-back folks, even though from time to time a little eccentric. Take Lester Winey for example, the old lighthouse keeper. Due to his tremendous fear of the *Outside* he can be very insistent when it comes to destroying whatever flotsam is washed ashore. Or Byson Supperfield, a textbook example for a selfmade man and owner of the local balloon factory. He is urging Oscar to finally allow himself his very own custom-tailored exemplar. After all, a true Lotusian who is worth the name flies a balloon over his house, the bigger the better. This tradition dates back many centuries and has its seeds in the historic anxiety of the citizens, that their island might one day sink to the bottom of the sea.

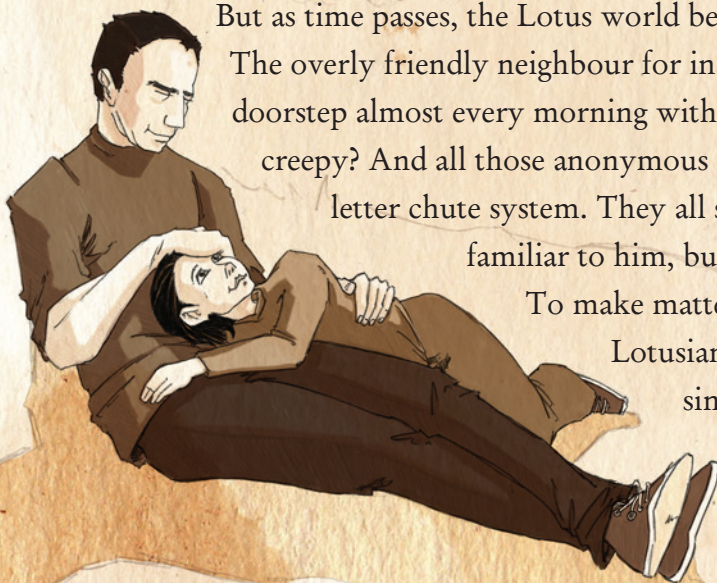
Oscar is the author of a couple of famous children's books, but when his wife Karen left him, his inspiration left together with her. Since that time he suffers from nightmares and writer's block. Therefore he has moved to the island to get treated by a well-respected psychologist and sleep therapist.

At that point Oscar hasn't got the faintest idea that Lotus Island itself is only a dream. In reality he was involved in a car accident, where he suffered a severe head trauma. He has been in a coma ever since. However, his subconscious has created an almost idyllic world for him out of bits and pieces of his fondest memories. Here he is able to be together with his daughter and to lead a happy life without the need to confront himself with what really happened.

But as time passes, the Lotus world becomes more and more threatening: The overly friendly neighbour for instance, who shows up on Oscar's doorstep almost every morning with fresh apple pie. Isn't she a little creepy? And all those anonymous postcards he receives via the island's letter chute system. They all show motifs that seem strangely familiar to him, but he can't quite put a finger on it.

To make matters worse, the nightmare of the Lotusians seems to come true: Their island is sinking! This announcement causes an uproar among the citizens, during which Lena disappears.

Now Oscar is left with no choice: He finally has to face the fact that





something is utterly wrong with Lotus. In his search for Lena and for answers he descends into the dark catacombs below the island.

### *Lena*

Lena is thirteen and she suffers from a disease with seven syllables: Rhab-do-my-yo-sar-co-ma, a malignant cancer. Since about her seventh birthday she has been in and out of the hospital, one chemotherapy following the next. As her mother explains to her that the cancer has metastasized and spread to her brain, she knows exactly what that means. In fact she has accepted her fate in her own way and she is sick and tired of all the exhausting treatments that only seem to postpone the inevitable. But what really gets her mad is Oscar, who has apparently made it his business to spread excessive optimism in every direction and to entirely close his eyes to reality. Ever since she was a little girl he has told her stories — and magnificent stories they were! — of adventures and faraway countries. He has always impressed on her that there's hope until the very end, as long as you don't despair and give up. But since that time Lena has grown up and now she understands that there won't be a happy ending to her story. Her father doesn't realize this and

thereby constantly gives her the sensation that she's failing him. And yet in spite of all her anger Lena isn't able to break Oscar's heart by telling him how she truly feels.

When she has to write an essay for homework, inspired by the *Odyssey*, she is particularly fascinated by one episode: Ulysses and his companions run ashore on the island of the Lotus eaters. By consuming the Lotus fruit the residents live in a constant state of sweet oblivion, without even noticing their dull surroundings. Two of his companions taste the fruit and as a result they refuse to leave the island together with the others. For the first time in a long while they feel entirely happy and content. However, Ulysses forces them to depart with him, ignoring all their pleading and resistance.

This story reminds Lena of her father. But she is also intrigued herself by the concept of such an island, where one can leave all sorrows behind and simply live on happily ever after. She wonders, whether Ulysses did right by his companions, when he took their happiness away, even though it was only an illusion.

Lena turns the tables and begins to write a story about Lotus Island for her father, and meanwhile she has to deal with her own sensations too.

### *Karen*

Karen is Oscar's wife and Lena's mom. She works as paediatrician and therefore he has always left the medical decisions to her. He is convinced that she will rescue their daughter, no matter what. When Lena's CT-scan shows that the cancer has spread further and metastasized, Karen is at her wits' end. She realizes that the fight is lost, but she isn't able to force Oscar to acknowledge that truth. Instead, he is still convinced that somehow Lena will recover. While Karen prepares herself for the worst, he continues to make plans for the time after the chemotherapy. He suggests a family holiday on an island in the Mediterranean, so that the three of them can get some peace after all this mess.

Therefore Lena's death hits him like a road train. He feels betrayed by Karen, but can't really articulate his feelings. In the middle of a fight he storms out of the house. Shortly afterwards Karen receives the message that her husband had a car accident. Oscar is in a coma, the police assumes a suicide attempt.

As a result Karen blames herself, since she couldn't prepare him for Lena's death and was too caught up in her own grief to help him through his despair. At the same time she is also mad at him for abandoning her like that.

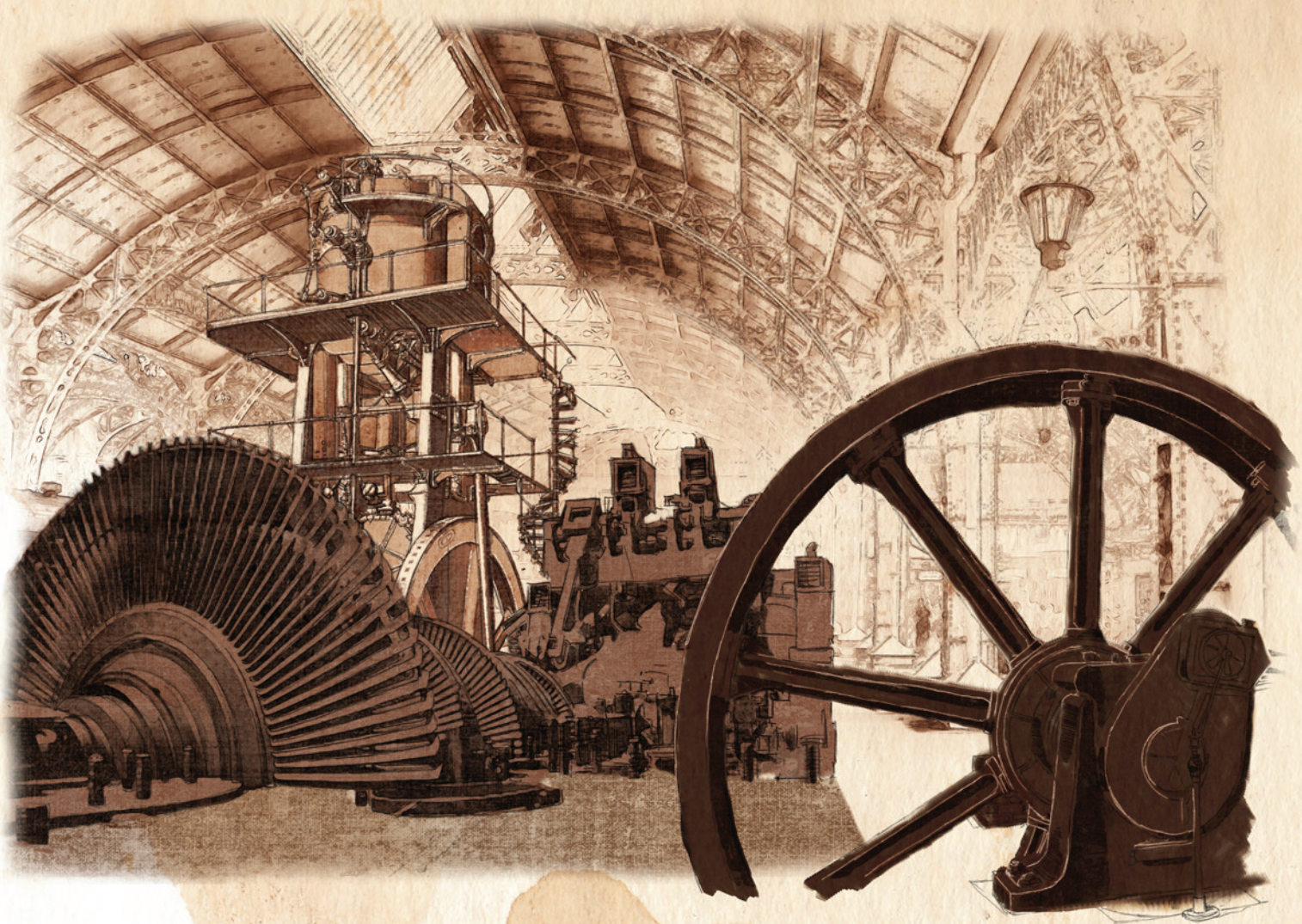
Sitting at Oscar's bedside, she tells him stories of fond memories and happier times, hoping to get through to him. But in order to give Oscar a reason to return to reality she first needs to deal with her own feelings. Finally, Karen brings her-

self to read Lena's unfinished story of Lotus Island to him. The narration subtly blends in with his dreams and disturbs the perfect world that his subconscious has created.

When Lena's narration abruptly stops at a turning point, the choice lies with Oscar: How should he end it? Should he rescue the sinking island and live there together with his daughter, happily ever after? Or should he wake from his coma, face the reality of Lena's death and return to his wife?

### *Structure*

*Lotus Island* consists of three story lines that closely influence each other. The main plot follows Oscar on the island, but as soon as it becomes evident that Lotus is a coma dream, the other strings become more prominent. Little by little it is revealed, how Lena's struggle with her disease and her narration of Lotus Island influence Oscar's dreams, piece by piece the puzzle of Karen's relationship to Oscar is put together. We realize, how images, situations and characters on Lotus Island origin in the real world.



## Design

The dream-like appeal of *Lotus Island* is supported by the design of the island, which is influenced by the Steampunk genre. As wikipedia states it:

*«Steampunk involves a setting where steam power is widely used — whether in an alternative history such as Victorian era Britain or «Wild West»-era United States, or in a post-apocalyptic time — that incorporates elements of either science fiction or fantasy. Works of steampunk often feature anachronistic technology, or futuristic innovations as Victorians might have envisioned them, based on a Victorian perspective on fashion, culture, architectural style, and art. This technology includes such fictional machines as those found in the works of H. G. Wells and Jules Verne...»*

Steampunk involves a certain nostalgia for the past and old-fashioned things, combined with a subtle fear of progress. These are both things that count for the residents of Lotus, too. But since the island additionally has to function as a mirror to the real world, Steampunk elements are used lightly at first. Except for the balloons and the letter chute system,

Lotus City could just as well be a slightly strange, laid-back town somewhere in the Mediterranean. Since the inhabitants are a droll folks anyway, we believe that they might dress in an old-fashioned way.

The alleys are narrow and the island is small, so there is no need for cars and of course these people aren't too interested in the accomplishments of modern communication. When Oscar finally confronts himself with the fact that Lotus isn't real, he descends into the catacombs under the island and below the surface there waits a whole new world for him, far more dream-like and threatening as on the surface.

Here the design becomes more daring and technical.



## *Production*

*Lotus Island* is intended for cinematic release and is currently in pre-production. The production company is Lailaps Pictures ([www.lailaps.eu](http://www.lailaps.eu)), who are specializing in international productions. They already collaborated very successfully with the author and director Martin Wallner during the production of the short film *A Lost and Found Box of Human Sensation*. For this project they were able to win over the internationally acclaimed actors Joseph Fiennes (*Shakespeare in Love*) and Ian McKellen (*The Lord of the Rings*).

The development of the screenplay for *Lotus Island* was supported with 20.000 Euro by the Bavarian public film fund FFF. Currently the screenplay is revised for the second draft.



## Writer

Martin Wallner studied at the University of Applied Sciences in Augsburg and at the University of Newcastle (Australia) and holds diplomas in both Computer Science and Design, as well as a Master degree in Interactive Media Systems.

In 2008 he founded Dancing Squirrel, a studio for film and conceptual media development. He is awardee of two programs initiated by the German government, a competition to promote the creative industry, as well as the Exist scholarship (co-financed by the EU).



Martin Wallner has been working as writer and director since 2008. His debut *A Lost and Found Box of Human Sensation* won numerous prizes worldwide, such as the First Steps Award, Germany's most prestigious distinction for upcoming filmmakers. It screened in competition at more than 130 international film festivals and was part of the *Next Generation Reel* of German Films, which premiered in Cannes in May 2011. According to the FFA (German Federal Film Board) ranking for reference funding *A Lost and Found Box of Human Sensation* was the most successful German short film in 2011.

Filmography: *A Lost and Found Box of Human Sensation* (2010)

### *Festivals and awards (excerpt):*

- 2012: Best Independent Animation – ECU European Independent Film Festival, Paris
- 2011: Murnau Short Film Prize 2011, Germany  
Grand Prix – Festival International de Cinéma d'Animation de Meknès, Maroc  
First Prize – Concours de Courts, Toulouse, France  
Golden Horseman, Best Animation National – Filmfest Dresden, Germany
- 2010: First Steps Award – Best Short Film  
Best Film – Interfilm Festival, Berlin, Germany  
Grand Prix du Jury – Rencontres Henri Langlois, Poitier, France  
Grand Prix, Best International Film of the Year – Odense IFF, Denmark  
Special Jury Prize – Bradford IAF, England  
First Prize Animation – Rhode Island IFF, USA  
Quality Seal: highly recommended
- 2008: Silver Prize Short Film – Page International Screenwriting Awards, Hollywood, USA  
Toronto CFC, Annecy, South by Southwest, Tribeca, Festival de Cannes, ITFS Stuttgart

[www.lostbox.de](http://www.lostbox.de)



## Contact

### Production Company

Lailaps Pictures GmbH  
Bauerstraße 20  
80786 München

Phone: +49-89-54 04 655-0  
Fax: +49-89-54 04 655-11

[lailaps@lailaps.eu](mailto:lailaps@lailaps.eu)  
[www.lailaps.eu](http://www.lailaps.eu)

### Writer

Martin Wallner  
Dancing Squirrel  
Alte Gasse 22  
86152 Augsburg

Phone: +49-176-20 83 97 44

[m.wallner@dancing-squirrel.com](mailto:m.wallner@dancing-squirrel.com)  
[www.dancing-squirrel.com](http://www.dancing-squirrel.com)

### Websites

[www.lotusisland.de](http://www.lotusisland.de)  
[www.lotus-movie.com](http://www.lotus-movie.com)

