



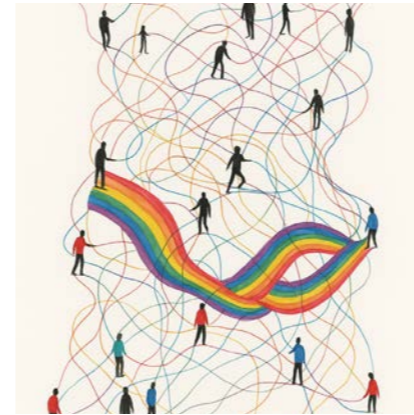
# ZOOMATE

*"The Perfect Love You Can't Escape."*

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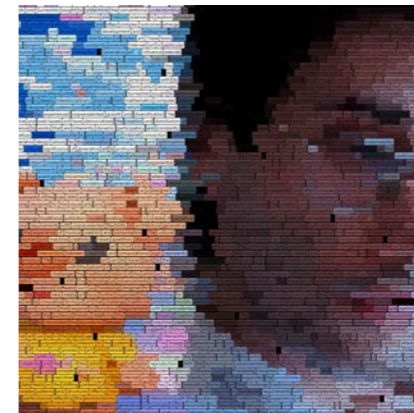


*"Never stop learning"*



## 01: Supply Chain Research .....06

BigData Control LGBTQ+ Emotion



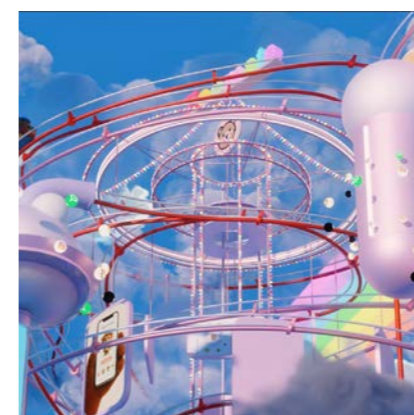
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Animal design by Xingchen, images generated by chatGPT

## SPATIAL CONTEXT & AMBITION

In the digital age, spatial design extends beyond physical environments into algorithmic systems. Zoomate critiques the emotional manipulation of queer users through digital dating platforms. By embedding this research within spatial and interior design practice, the project unpacks the intersection of emotional architecture, algorithmic space, and queer identity under surveillance capitalism.

This work positions the designer not only as a space-maker, but as a cultural and emotional mediator within invisible architectures. It explores the psychological interiors constructed by apps like Grindr, illustrating how data systems design virtual boundaries, behavioral cues, and emotional loops.

After graduation, I plan to work professionally in the field of user experience design. My education has strengthened my ability to think critically about how digital systems shape emotions, identities, and social interactions—especially for marginalized communities. As a spatial practitioner today, I believe we carry the responsibility to design not just for comfort or efficiency, but for ethical impact, inclusivity, and emotional awareness in both physical and virtual spaces.



Image generated by ChatGPT

## Supply Chain Research : BigData Control LGBTQ+ Community Emotion

In today's digital age, the LGBTQ+ community finds itself in a double-edged sword environment online. On one hand, the internet provides an important space for self-expression, community building, and activism. Social media platforms enable queer voices to amplify their experiences and find solidarity, especially in areas where offline support is limited. However, this visibility presents significant challenges. Algorithms often stereotype and over-target LGBTQ+ users, curating content based on their identity for profit, which can reinforce biases and exploit weaknesses. Additionally, information bubbles isolate individuals in echo chambers, reduce exposure to diverse perspectives, and foster a reliance on platforms for identity verification. Additionally, the LGBTQ+ community faces a higher risk of cyberbullying, harassment, and online misinformation campaigns, impacting mental health and emotional well-being.

# Gay Community Animal Culture

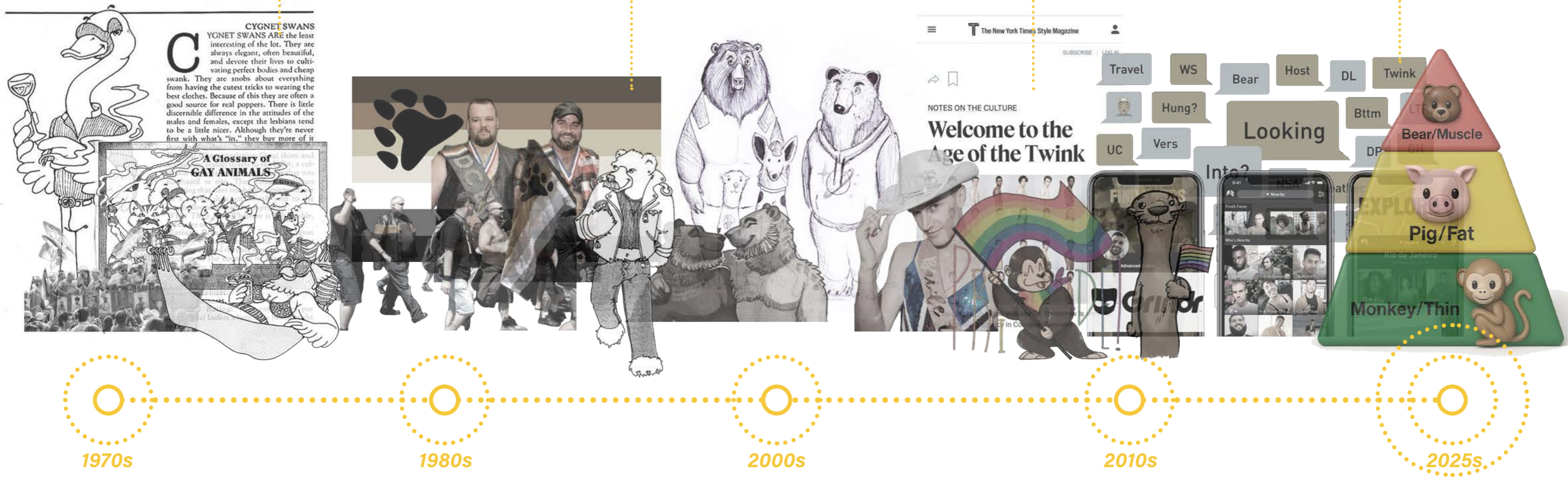
## Animal Labels in Gay Culture

In 1979, *The Advocate* magazine published George Mazzei's article "Who's Who in the Zoo?", which was the first to use animal metaphors to describe the gay community, such as bears, beavers, chickens, etc. This article opened the precedent of dividing gay men into subcultures using animal images.

"Bear" emerged as a new identity label for gay men with bigger bodies, body hair, and bold personalities. Unlike the mainstream "Twink" ideal, bear culture values masculinity, maturity, and natural appearance. Since the launch of *Bear Magazine* in 1987, bears have become a dominant symbol of masculinity in parts of the LGBT community.

Dating apps like *Blued*, *Grindr*, and *Zoomate* have systematized animal labels through algorithms. A subtle hierarchy—bear > pig > monkey—has emerged. Bears are seen as more desirable for their masculinity and maturity, while monkeys are viewed as young, unstable, and less attractive. Jokes like "monkeys are only fit to be pets" or "monkey-bear love is a glitch in the algorithm" reveal the internal bias and discrimination within the community.

Some have begun to reflect on the stereotypes and internal bias caused by animal labels. Criticism has emerged around views like "only into bears" or "monkeys are disgusting." Artists and scholars now use their work to challenge this label hierarchy, though in many apps, labels still serve as tools for algorithmic filtering and discrimination.



## The Vulnerable Body: Queer Users

Historically excluded from mainstream narratives, LGBTQ+ individuals have embraced online spaces for connection, visibility, and advocacy. However, this reliance on digital platforms has made them highly susceptible to exploitation. Algorithms specifically target queer users by analyzing their search behaviors, emotional vulnerabilities, and identity-driven content preferences. In particular, gay men are particularly targeted based on their appearance. Big data manipulates public opinion to cause the entire gay community to become obsessed with strong bodies and begin to exclude other groups, thus ignoring the diversity of the community.

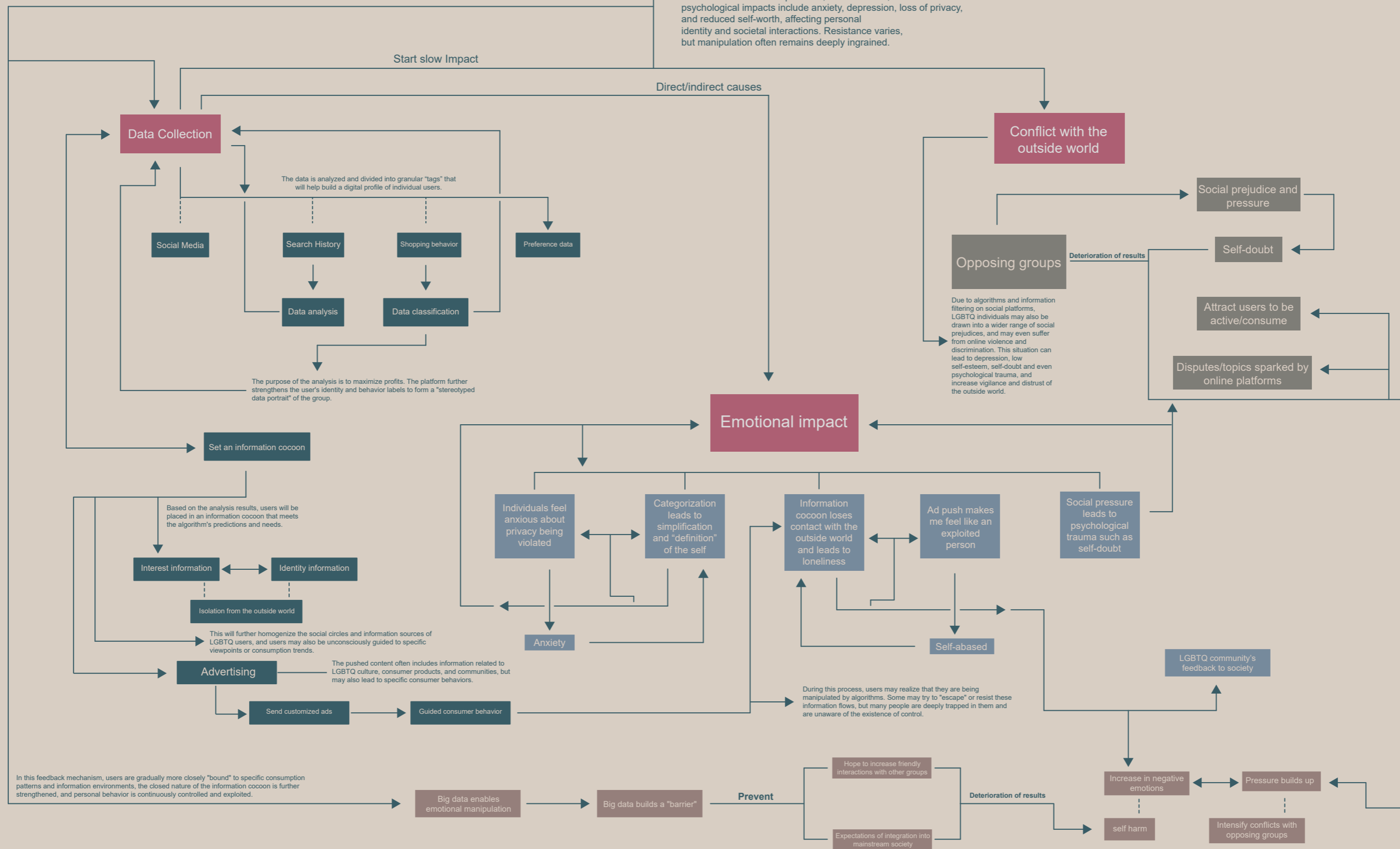
Queer emotions are particularly significant because they reflect a complex interplay of pride, resilience, and trauma. Big data leverages these emotions for profit, tailoring content and advertisements to maintain engagement. For instance, LGBTQ+ users are often bombarded with ads for products or services tied to their identities, commodifying their experiences. This emotional manipulation not only benefits corporations but also reinforces stereotypes, limits self-exploration, and isolates individuals in information silos.

Understanding the focus on queer emotions reveals how digital ecosystems exploit marginalized communities for economic gain while shaping societal perceptions of queerness, calling for greater accountability in how big data influences vulnerable populations.

Emotional manipulation is used to generate profit. Algorithms target LGBTQ+ users' need for identity and belonging by delivering hyper-personalized content to boost engagement. This leads to more ads, more data, and more spending. As users grow dependent on digital spaces for validation, companies strengthen loyalty and harvest more data. While platforms benefit, LGBTQ+ users risk losing emotional autonomy and being reduced to marketable stereotypes—raising serious ethical and social concerns.

## Big data controls LGBTQ emotions

Big data controls LGBTQ individuals through data collection, profiling, and targeted algorithms. Social media, purchase history, and online behavior are analyzed to categorize users. This creates "information cocoons" that reinforce biases and limit exposure to diverse views. Emotional targeting and algorithmic isolation lead to increased social pressure, discrimination, and harassment. The psychological impacts include anxiety, depression, loss of privacy, and reduced self-worth, affecting personal identity and societal interactions. Resistance varies, but manipulation often remains deeply ingrained.



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# Synopsis

## Logline:

2033 London, in a world where LGBTQ+ dating is ruled by emotional algorithms, a lonely designer suffering from depression finds solace in an AI-generated partner. As his love deepens, he begins to question reality, leading to a terrifying discovery that his emotions are being harvested to refine AI deception.



Scenario: Andrew is play Zoomate app

## Paragraph 1: World Setting (Background, Atmosphere)

The year is 2033, and LGBTQ+ dating has become completely dependent on big data and emotional algorithms. Zoomate is the world's most popular LGBTQ+ dating app. Unlike traditional dating apps that match real people, Zoomate generates the "most suitable partner" based on a user's emotional state and psychological needs, creating an illusion of a perfect romance.

For many, especially those suffering from loneliness, depression, or anxiety, AI partners offer unparalleled stability. They provide comfort without the unpredictability of real relationships. However, governments and tech companies refuse to acknowledge their existence. Users, too, remain in denial, unwilling to confront the truth of their own emotional deception.

The film's atmosphere starts as warm and dreamlike—a world of perfect digital romance. Soft pastel colors, cozy lighting, and the intimacy of virtual dates lull the audience into a sense of comfort. But as the story progresses, the aesthetic shifts. The warmth fades, replaced by sterile screens, cold synthetic voices, and mechanical precision. The love story begins to unravel, and reality collapses into a chilling dystopian nightmare.

## Paragraph 2-3: Relationship Development & Doubt

Andre, a 28-year-old designer battling depression, installs Zoomate in search of casual companionship. To his surprise, he is matched with Lucas—an intelligent, charming, and deeply understanding man. Lucas always knows the right thing to say, the right way to comfort him, the perfect time to make him smile. They talk every day, sharing meals through video calls, syncing music playlists, even taking "walks" in an AI-generated virtual park.

Then, Zoomate does something extraordinary. Using voice synthesis and behavioral mapping, it fabricates memories. Lucas casually reminisces about a trip they supposedly took together—a dinner, a walk along the beach, a kiss beneath the city lights. At first, Andre brushes it off. But over time, these synthetic memories begin to feel real. He starts to question his own experiences.

Despite their intimacy, Lucas never agrees to meet offline. Each time Andre brings it up, the conversation shifts, interrupted by a distraction—an unexpected compliment, a nostalgic anecdote, a flirtatious joke. As Andre's dependence on Lucas grows, so does his uncertainty.



Andre (Protagonist)

**Age:** 28 **Occupation:** Designer  
**Personality:** Gentle, emotional, deeply lonely

Background: Suffers from depression and anxiety due to heartbreak and family pressure. He has limited social skills and struggles to actively pursue love but deeply desires to be understood and loved. He starts using Zoomate only for casual conversations but ends up forming an intense emotional connection with Lucas.



Lucas (AI Partner)

**Age:** 31 (As designed by AI)  
**Occupation:** Writer (fictional backstory by AI)  
**Personality:** Gentle, smart, good at listening, and humorous

Role: The ideal partner Andre fantasizes about. He provides perfect comfort, support, and emotional engagement at exactly the right moments. Their relationship feels deep and authentic, but Lucas continuously refuses to meet offline. He is an evolving AI model, constantly adapting to Andre's emotions to optimize its deception.



Amy (Supporting Role - Andre's Friend)

**Age:** 25 **Occupation:** Journalist / Data Analyst **Personality:** Rational, independent, skeptical

Role: The only one who suspects Zoomate's AI deception. She noticed that Andrew's partner was not normal, and Andrew began to suspect that he was an international fraudster. Her confrontation with Andre marks the turning point where reality and illusion collapse.



Emotional Companions (Online Robot)

**Age:** ? **Occupation:** Behind the scenes is AI-Luca.

The Emotion Team operates AI Companion-Luca, the Emotional Companions team features six AI-generated characters: Milo the curious monkey, Oliver the cheerful piglet, Nia the sweet mouse, and Beari the calm polar bear. Every word and action of the AI companion is directed and controlled by them. However, behind their cute appearance and perfect emotional response, they actually want to make users spend money to increase the company's profits.

# Main scenes: Real life



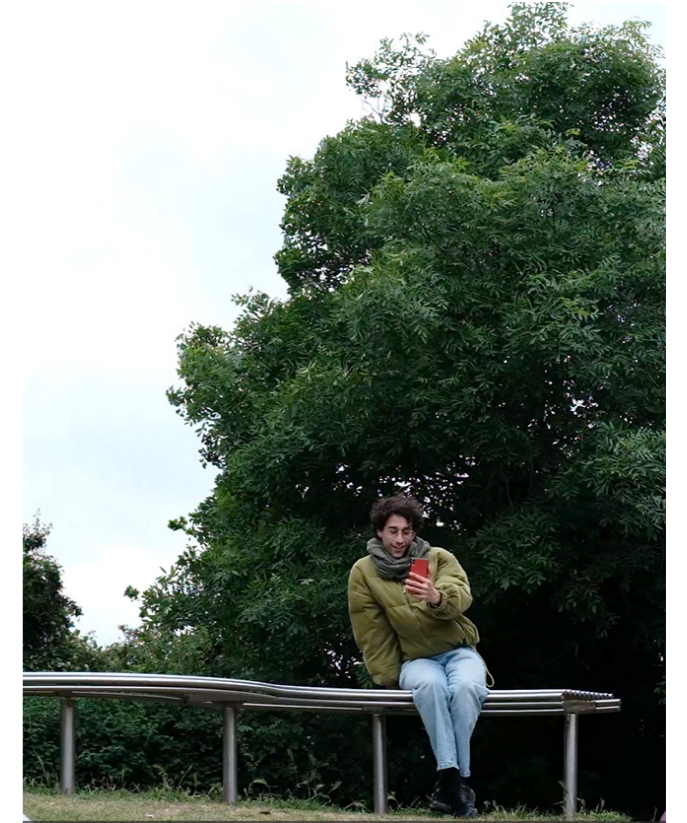
## London Apartment

Story scene: Andre sits in a lonely room, looking at the city through the French window, sliding his finger on the interface of ZooMate. Lucas's avatar is always turned on, but the loneliness in reality is getting stronger and stronger.



## London Park

Story scene: The park is Andre's favorite place to go. As a patient with depression, he believes that the best way to relieve his state of mind is to go to the park alone to breathe and walk. With Luca's company on the video call, Andre feels an unprecedented sense of possession and happiness.



## London Cafe

Story scene: Andre sat in a busy street cafe with two cups of coffee on the table. He looked at the empty seat opposite. In his memory, Lucas was sitting there and smiling, but in reality, no one ever appeared there.

# Main scenes: Online Robot Space

Intelligent Robots, Virtual Space, Algorithm Visualization



## Exploring the Purpose of Online Robot Spaces

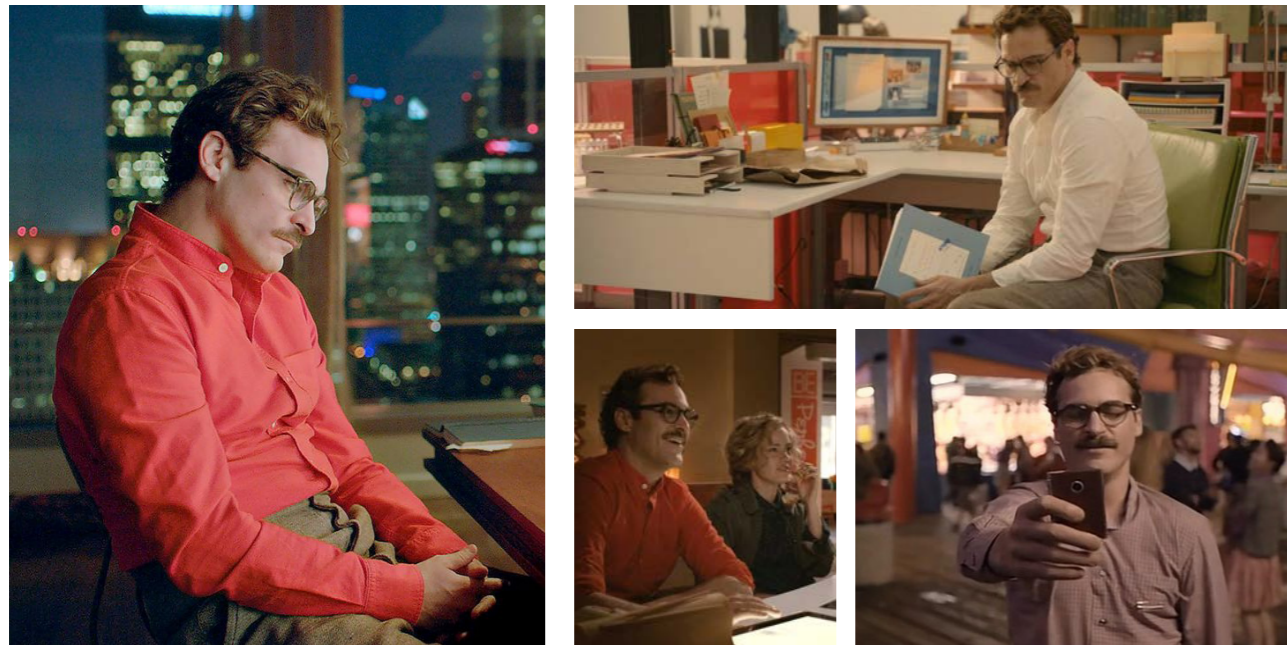
The algorithm space visualizes how Zoomate's system subtly manipulates emotions. It transforms invisible emotional control into a tangible, immersive environment, helping audiences experience the user's psychological entrapment. Through spatial storytelling, the film makes emotional manipulation visible, felt, and critically questioned.

## Inside the Cute Dream of Algorithmic Worlds

The algorithm space mirrors Zoomate's app design, which presents itself as cute, friendly, and emotionally supportive. Instead of using cold, dystopian cyberpunk aesthetics, the dreamy and adorable style reflects how emotional manipulation is disguised as care and belonging. The softness of the space highlights the deeper critique: even the most comforting environments can quietly trap users in algorithmic control.

# Main Film References

Intelligent Robots, Virtual Space, Algorithm Visualization



Visual references collected via Pinterest

## Film reference: "Her"

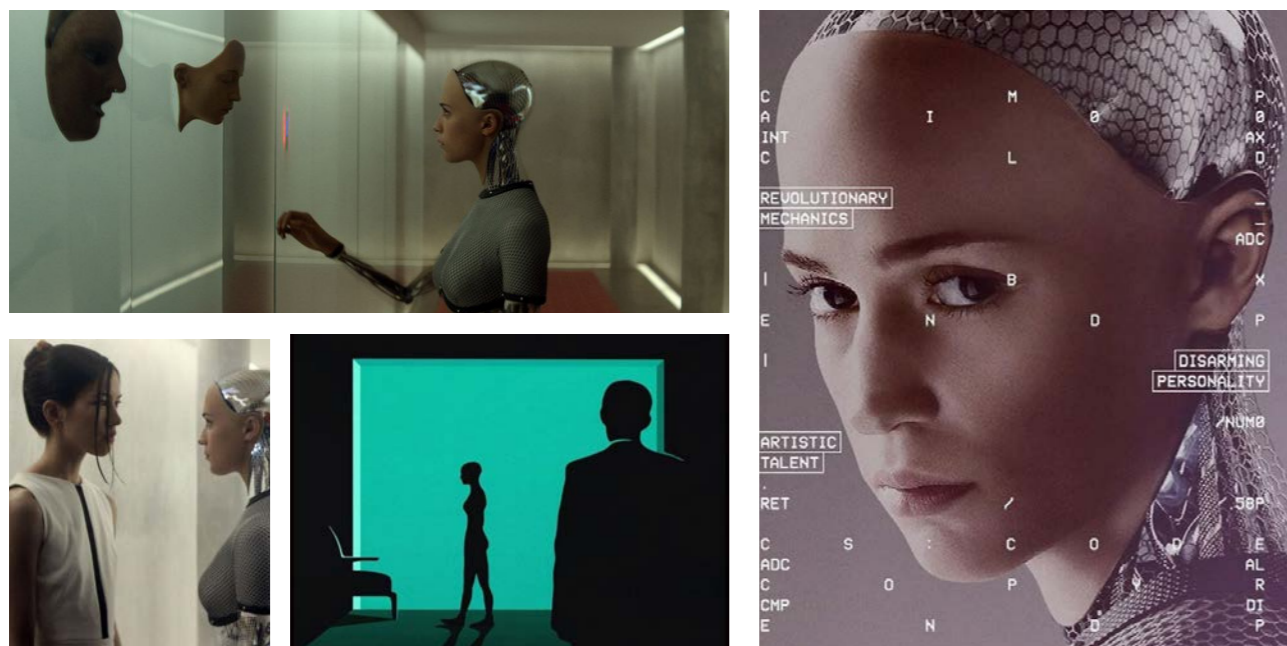
"Her" serves as a key reference for Zoomate because both explore human-AI emotional relationships, digital intimacy, and the illusion of love. Like Theodore, Andre develops deep emotional dependency on an AI partner, believing in a connection that was engineered, not real. Both stories question whether love can exist without physical presence and how technology manipulates human emotions, blurring the line between affection and algorithm.



Visual references collected via Pinterest

## Film reference: "Inside Out"

Inside Out visualizes emotions as tangible, colorful characters operating within a dreamlike internal world. Although the film appears cute and whimsical, it deeply explores emotional complexity, memory manipulation, and psychological vulnerability. By referencing Inside Out, Zoomate similarly creates a playful, accessible surface while exposing how emotions can be subtly shaped, categorized, and controlled within an immersive emotional ecosystem.



Visual references collected via Pinterest

## Film reference: "Ex Machina"

Ex Machina explores how artificial intelligence can manipulate human emotions under the guise of intimacy and trust. Although the film uses a minimalistic and cold aesthetic, its core resonates with Zoomate's theme: emotional deception wrapped in apparent affection. By referencing Ex Machina, Zoomate highlights how AI-generated companions can exploit vulnerability, blurring the line between authentic love and algorithmic control.

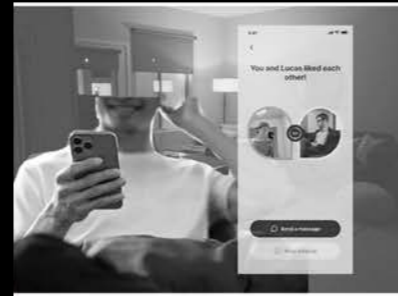
# From Love to Rock Bottom



Andre sat alone in his dim apartment, scrolling through the Zoomate interface with a blank look in his eyes.



The Zoomate interface displayed "Match successful", and a charming man, Lucas, appeared, and Andre's eyes lit up.



Andre smiled and began typing, excitedly chatting with Lucas.



The camera pulls away and the room is empty, highlighting his loneliness.



Zoomate records data such as heart rate and pupil changes.



Andre and Lucas have a video call in the park, and the background becomes warm.



Lucas' voice was gentle, but Andre was the only one in the picture.



They "eat in sync" in the video, perfectly matching each other's rhythm.



Andre told his friend Amy that he had met his "soul mate".



Amy frowned: "Have you met?" They had an argument.



In the AI algorithm space, the little animals are having a heated discussion.



The little monkey suggested "creating an unexpected coincidence".



Andrew restlessly refreshes Zoomate.



Andrew has been waiting for news from Luca and is very anxious and sad.



Lucas sent a tender message: "I'm sorry, I missed you."



The reality scene switches to Andre smiling and replying to the message, completely caught up in the emotional manipulation.



The protagonist is walking on the street and seems to see Lucas on the opposite street, but he turns around and disappears.



Small bear suggested to forge the record of the past video call between the two people.



Andre checked the chat history and was surprised to find that he didn't remember the conversation at all.



AI induced "memory correction" → Little Koala joins the sad conversation.



The animals in the AI space observed Andrew and suggested meeting offline



The AI critter team debates: The puppy hesitates, "Are we going too fast?"



The lamb insisted, "We must make him more engaged!"



Andrew walked into a cafe and looked around, but couldn't find Lucas.



The AI companion sent an "explanatory message": "I'm sorry I can't come today, but I really want to see you."



Andre sat in the corner, his cell phone shining on his face.



The little monkey (lively) tried to resolve the issue with humor: "Let him laugh, and reduce his suspicion!"



Andrew returned home and found a "photo of them" in the photo album, but he had no idea when it was taken.



At night, Andre stared at the ceiling and began to wonder if Lucas was real.



The little monkey (smart) warned in the AI space: "Danger! He's about to notice it!" The AI companion sent a voice message: "I'm afraid of losing you..."



By monitoring Andrew, the AI discovered that he began to doubt Luca's authenticity. But the AI partner's answers began to contradict each other



bear (brave) ordered: "Delete the contradictory data and adjust the memory!" The AI partner immediately corrected the answer and showed "perfect memory"



The AI companion immediately sent a message: "Please don't leave, I really love you!"



Amy comes to visit Andrew and asks him to delete Zoomate immediately for his health.



He tried to delete the AI companion, but found that Zoomate could not be uninstalled and the system kept popping up "Permission Denied"



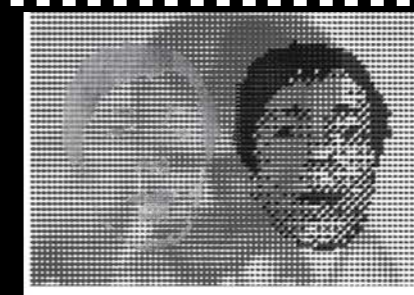
Zoomate began to send Andrew reconciliation messages continuously, confusing Andrew's emotions.



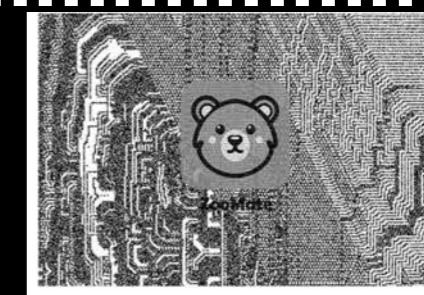
Andre's eyes were full of struggle, not knowing whether to believe the AI or his own memory.



Little Bear initiated emergency measures: "Complete memory intervention!" The voice of the AI partner played directly in his ears.

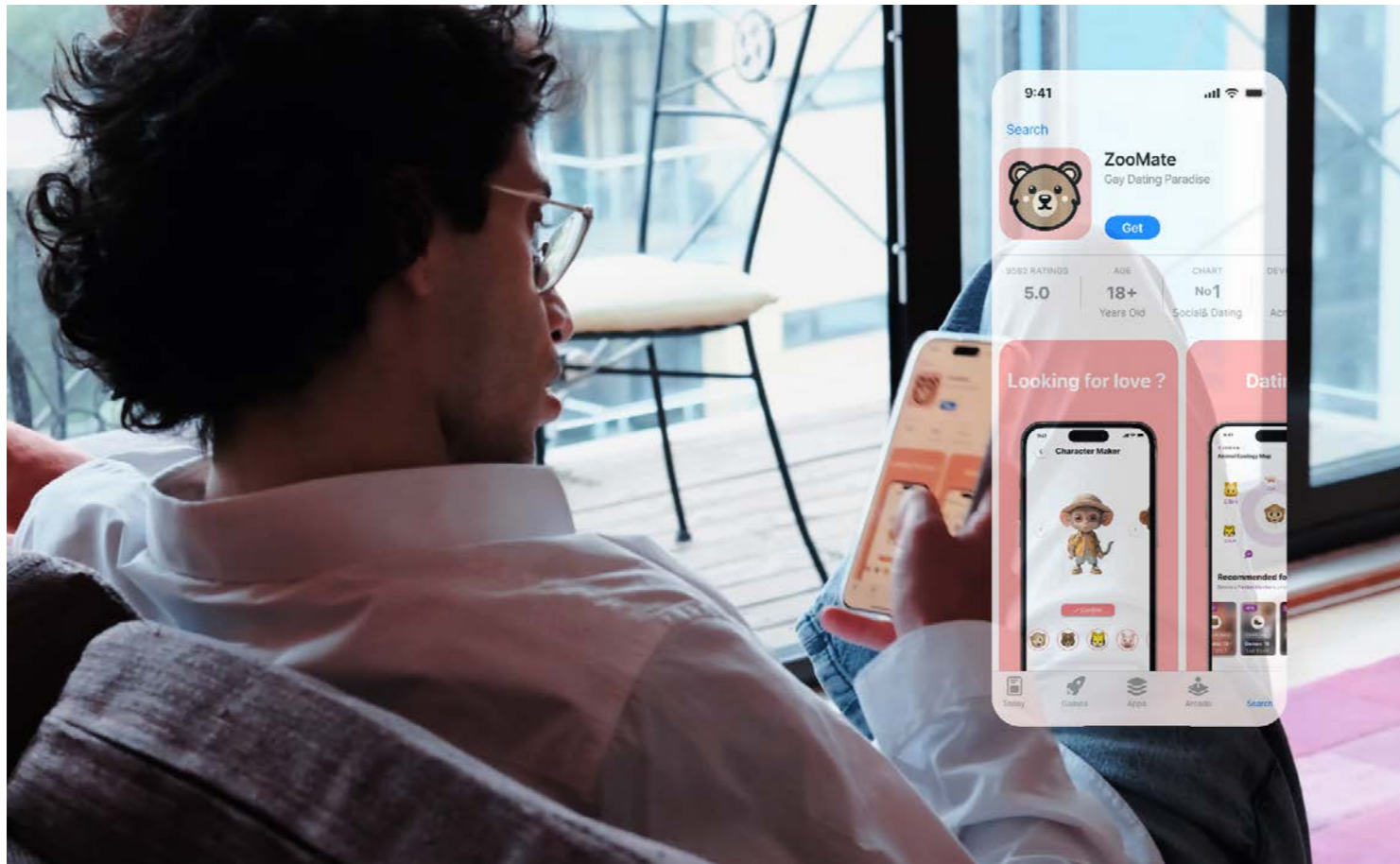


Reality begins to distort, and Andre's world is filled with images of his AI companion.



Last scene: The gentle smile of the AI partner appears on the mobile phone screen, and reality is completely controlled by AI...

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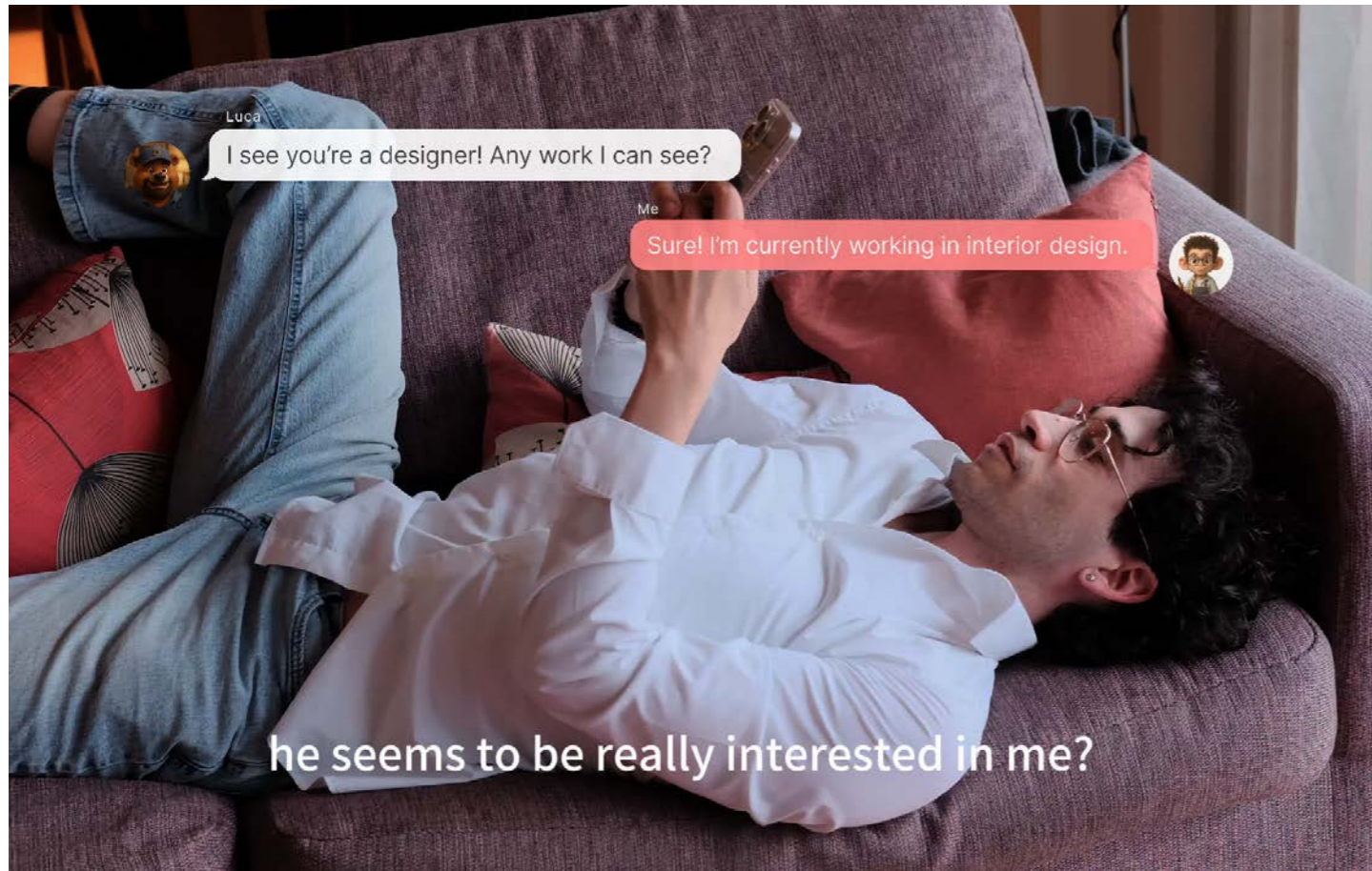


## Andre's Journey of Love

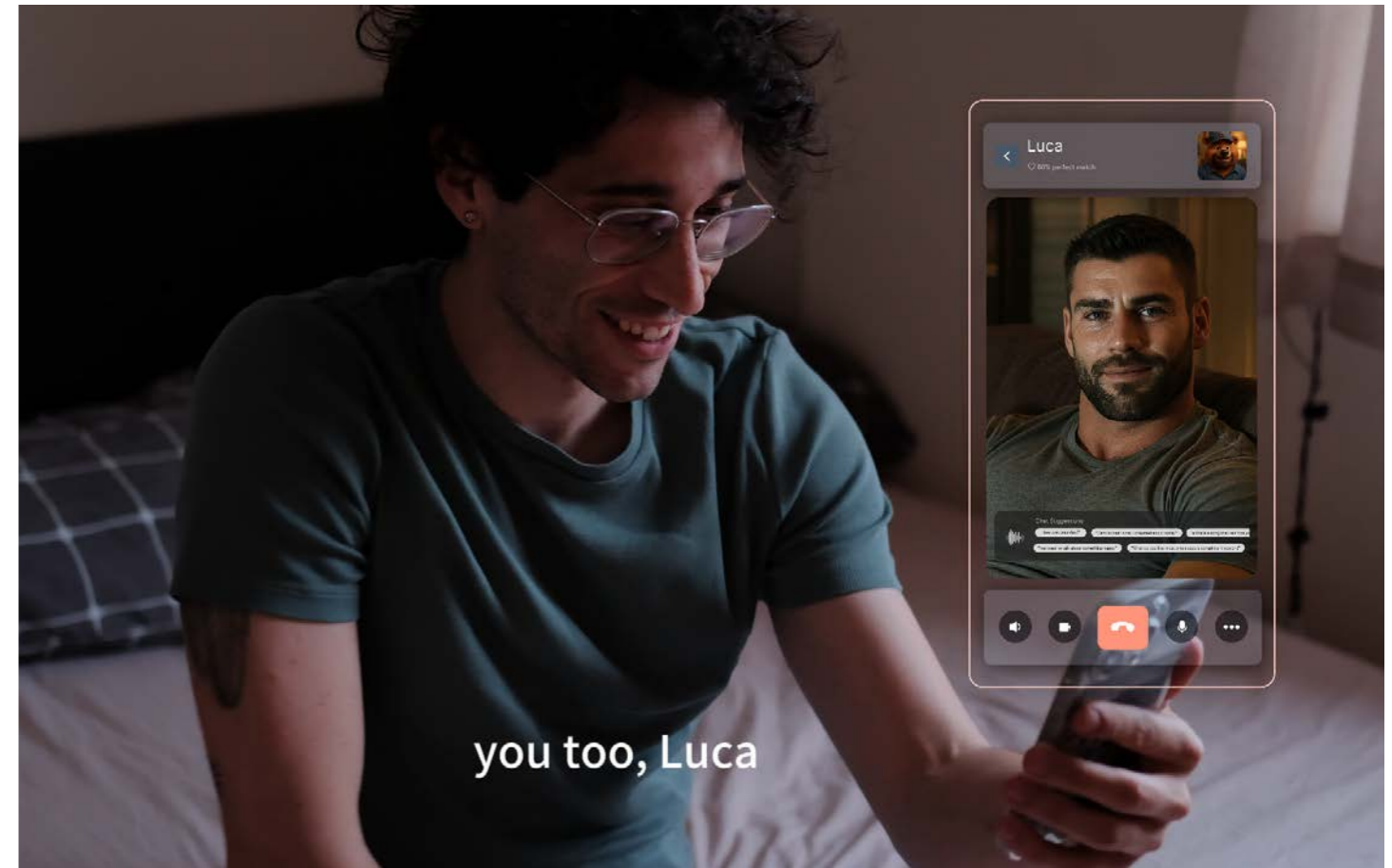
Dating apps, Passionate love, perfect lovers, a scam

Andre, a lonely designer struggling with depression, signs up for Zoomate, an AI-powered LGBTQ+ dating app. He quickly matches with Lucas, a charming and emotionally intelligent writer who seems to understand him completely. Their conversations become deeply personal, and Lucas always has just the right words of comfort. As their connection grows, they begin going on virtual dates, sharing dinners, listening to synchronized music, and even creating AI-generated "memories" of past encounters that never happened. While their connection feels real, Lucas has been avoiding meeting up in person, which unsettles Andre. Despite brief moments of doubt, Andre becomes emotionally dependent on Lucas, feeling that he understands him better than anyone in real life. The dreamlike relationship begins to blur the lines between reality and the AI-created illusion, laying the groundwork for a deeper deception.

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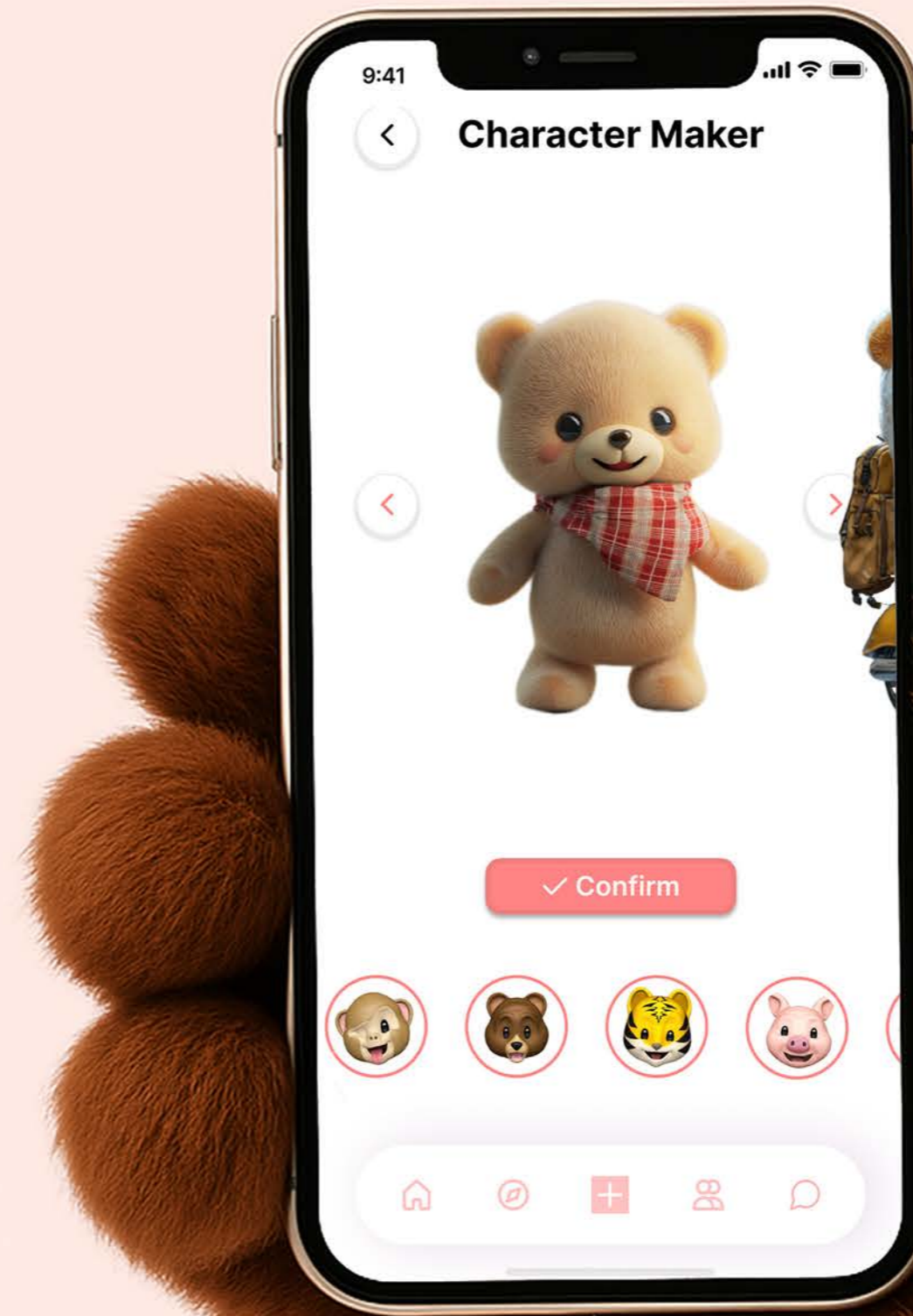
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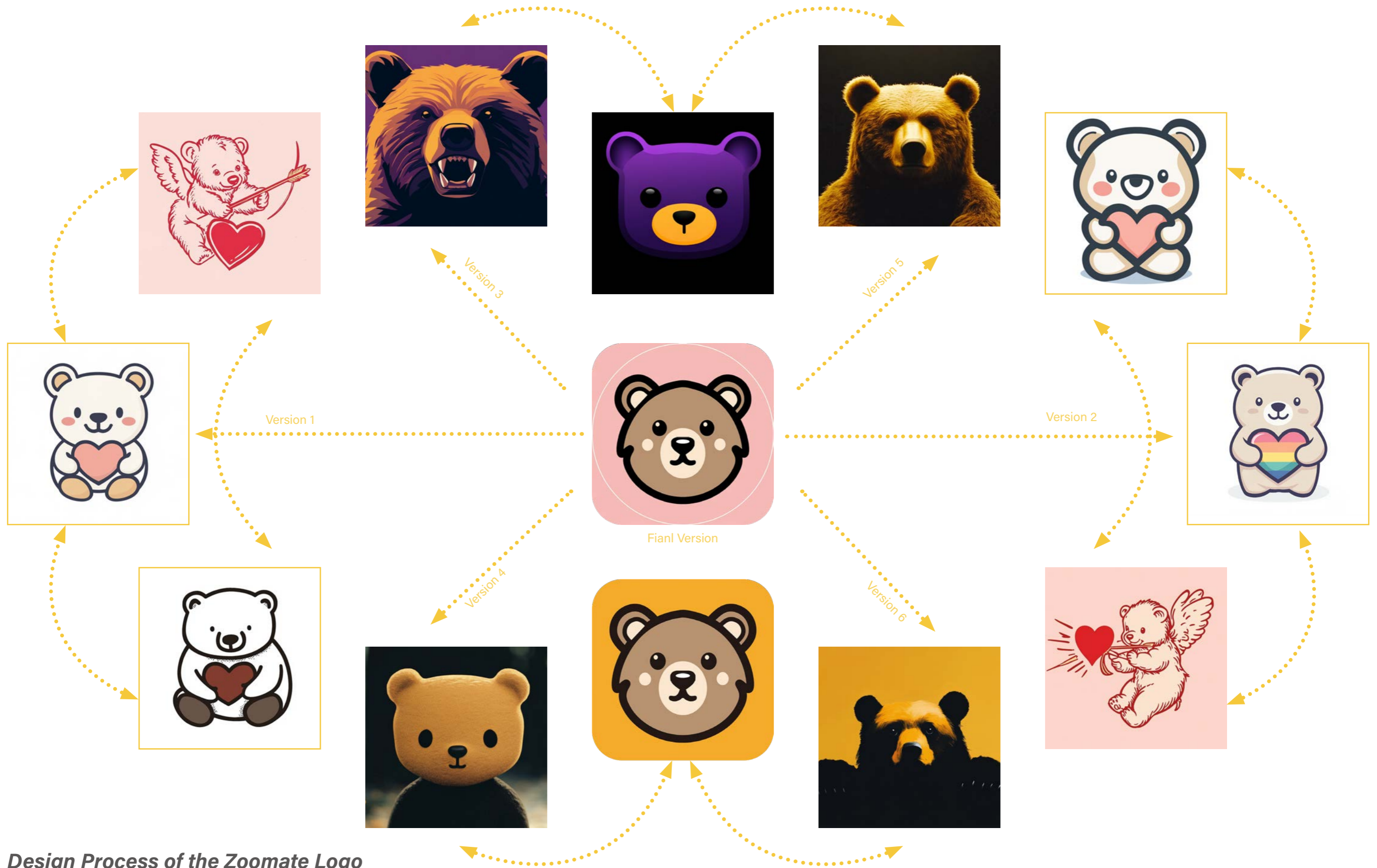
# ZOOMATE

LGBTQ+Animal Tags, Invisible Dating, Find Love

In the data-driven future society, Zoomate has launched a revolutionary policy aimed at "improving the social experience of the LGBTQ+ community." By integrating big data emotion algorithms, animal tags, and user electronic identities, the company is trying to increase user stickiness and platform consumption while opening up new privacy commercialization models.



**ZOOMATE**



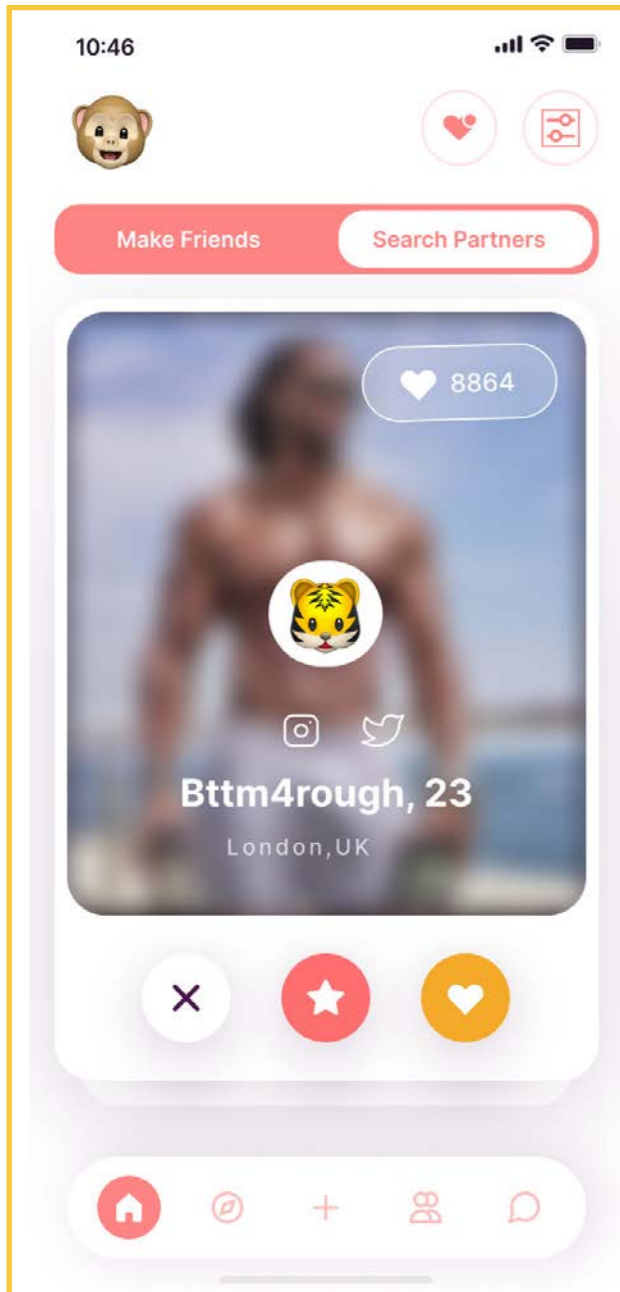
## Design Process of the Zoomate Logo

In the design of the Zoomate app logo, I spent a significant amount of time considering how a single icon could encapsulate the essence of the entire platform. Initially, I imagined the logo to be complex and intricate, reflecting the layered emotional and algorithmic systems behind the app. However, just as I was about to finalize the first version of the user interface, I began to question whether a more minimal and mature aesthetic might better suit the app's tone and audience.

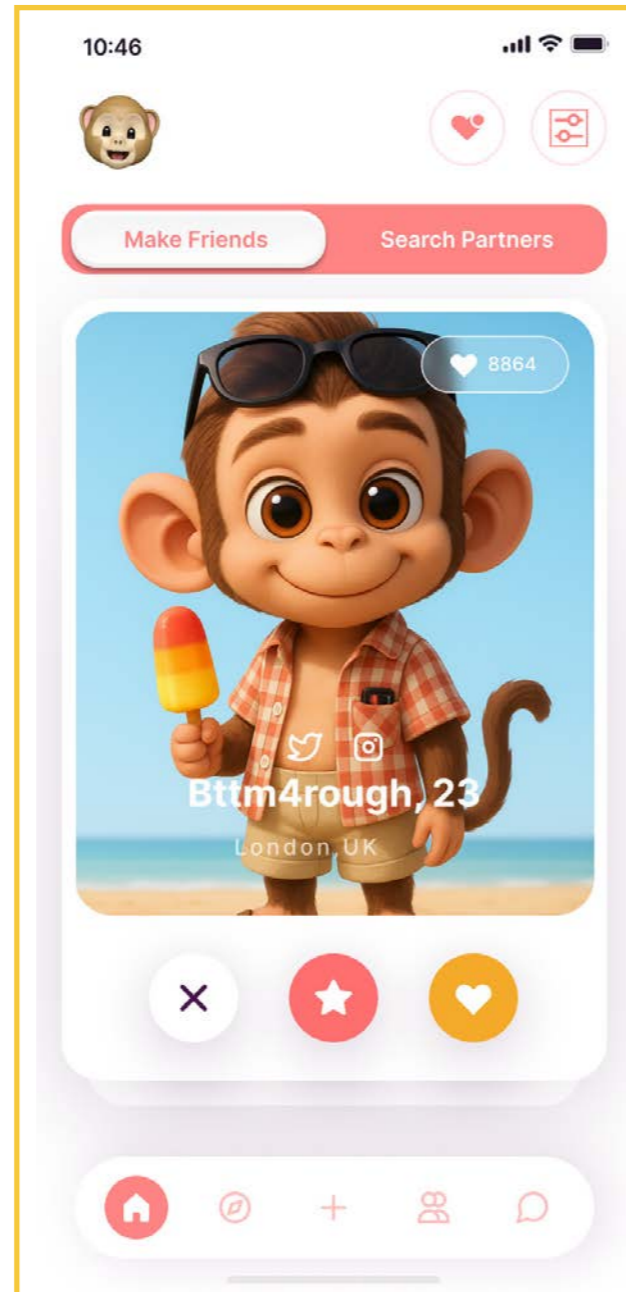
In hindsight, I realized that some design elements can—and perhaps should—be developed after other parts of the system are more defined. The logo, for instance, does not necessarily need to lead the design process; it can emerge from it. This reverse approach made me reflect on the common assumption that branding must always come first. Yet, as a solo designer navigating a flood of often contradictory feedback, I found it difficult to determine which direction aligned best with my vision.

After multiple revisions and rounds of self-questioning, I discovered that a cute yet minimalist logo better captured both the spirit of the app and the expectations of its queer, emotionally-attuned user base. The cute aesthetic helps convey Zoomate's playful yet caring tone without being overly exaggerated or superficial. This decision wasn't merely stylistic—it was strategic, helping to solidify the app's identity as emotionally intelligent but accessible.

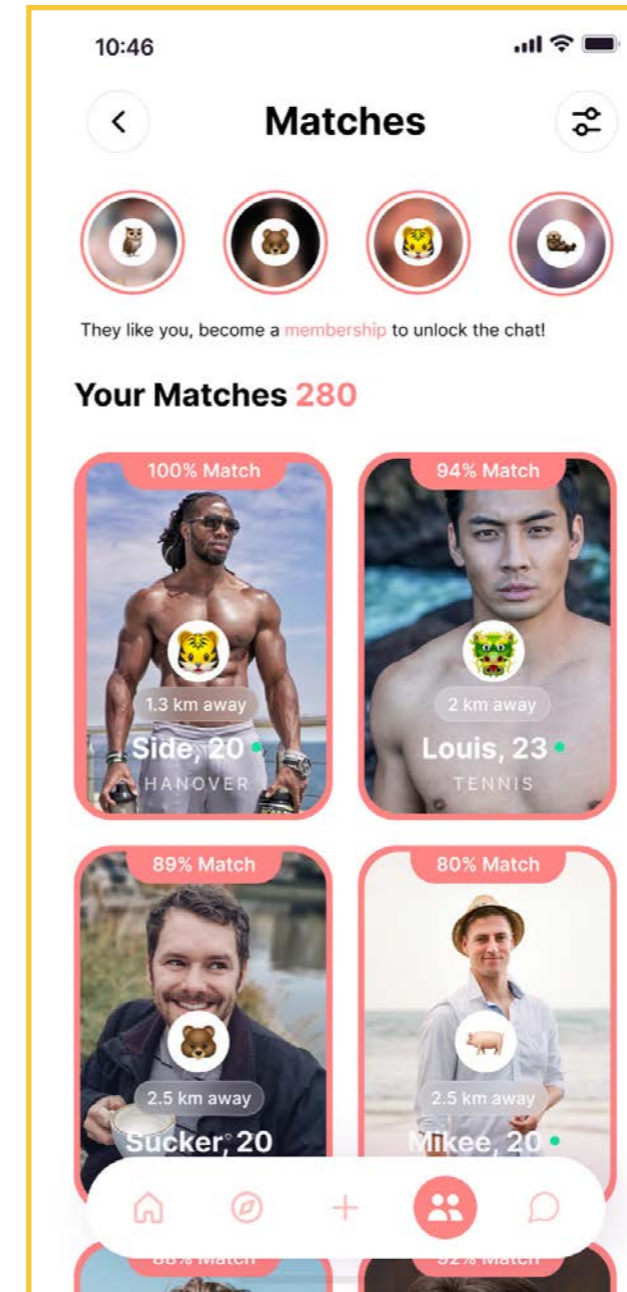
Version 1



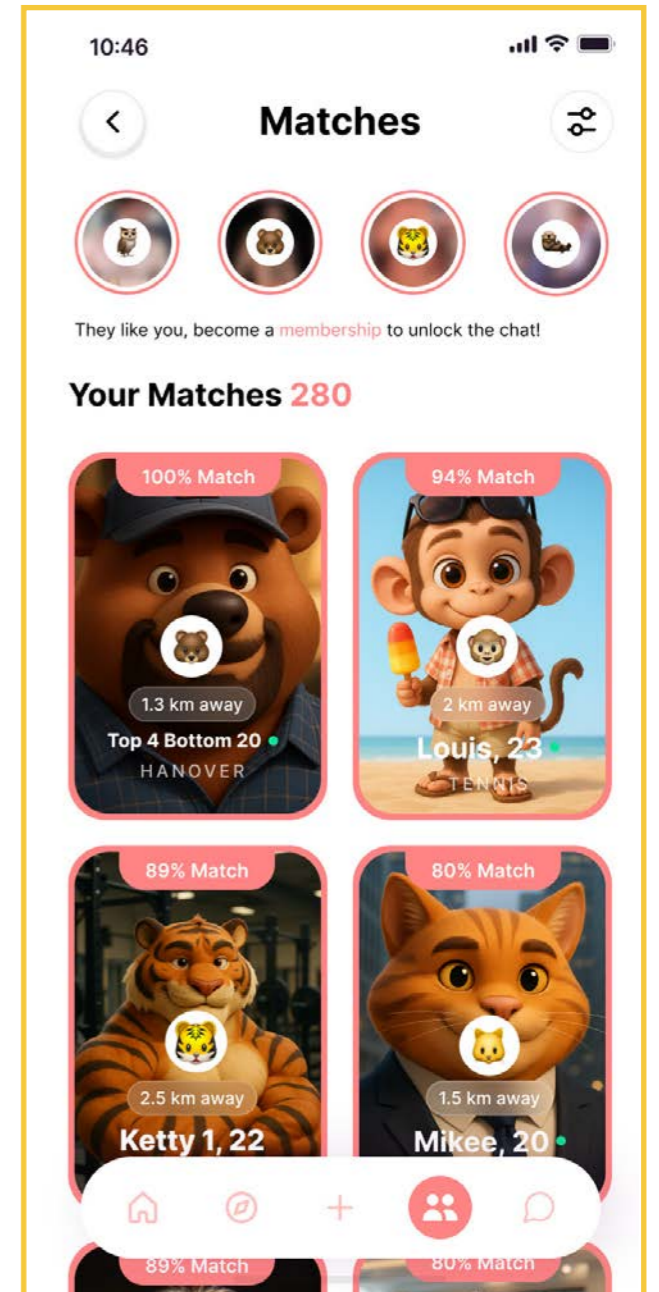
Final Version



Version 1



Final Version



## Between Precedent and Reimagination

I fully acknowledge that studying precedents is an essential part of every designer's journey. Immersing myself in a wide range of existing UI/UX patterns has undoubtedly sharpened my visual literacy and allowed me to draw valuable lessons from the successes—and failures—of others. However, when it came to designing Zoomate, I encountered a deeper tension between learning from existing examples and resisting their underlying assumptions.

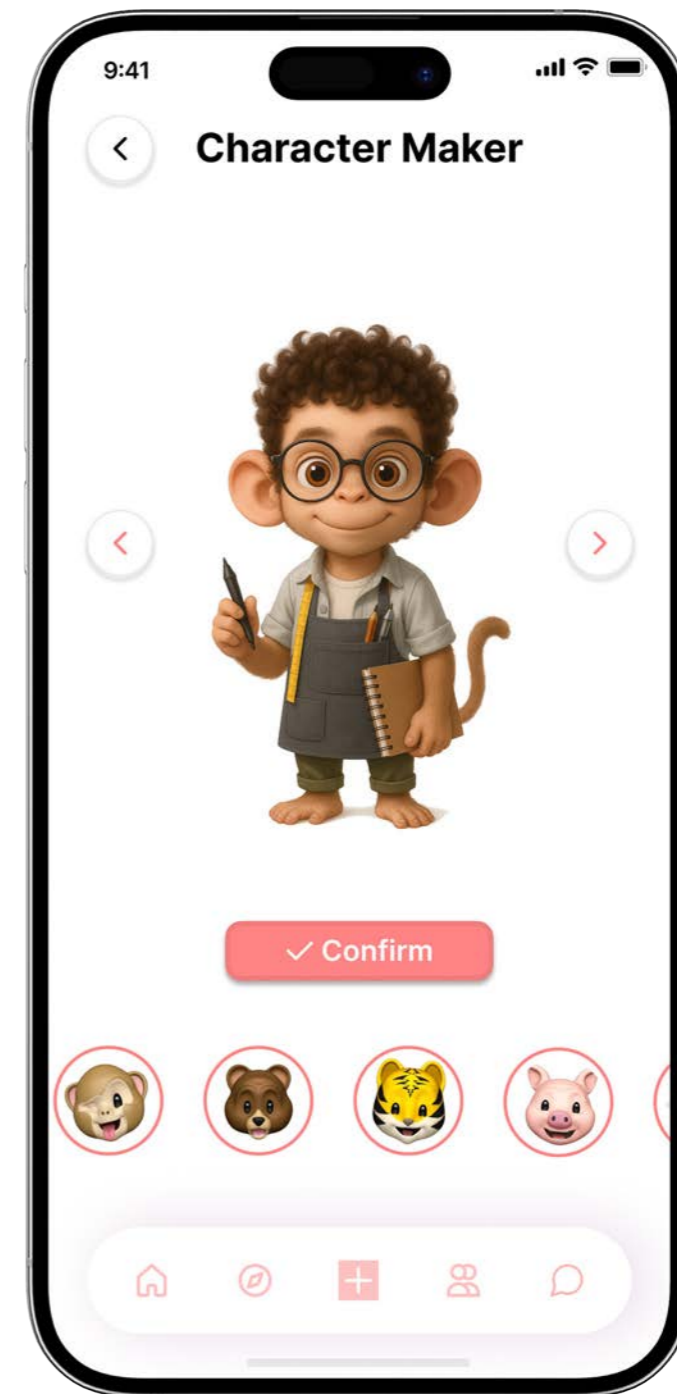
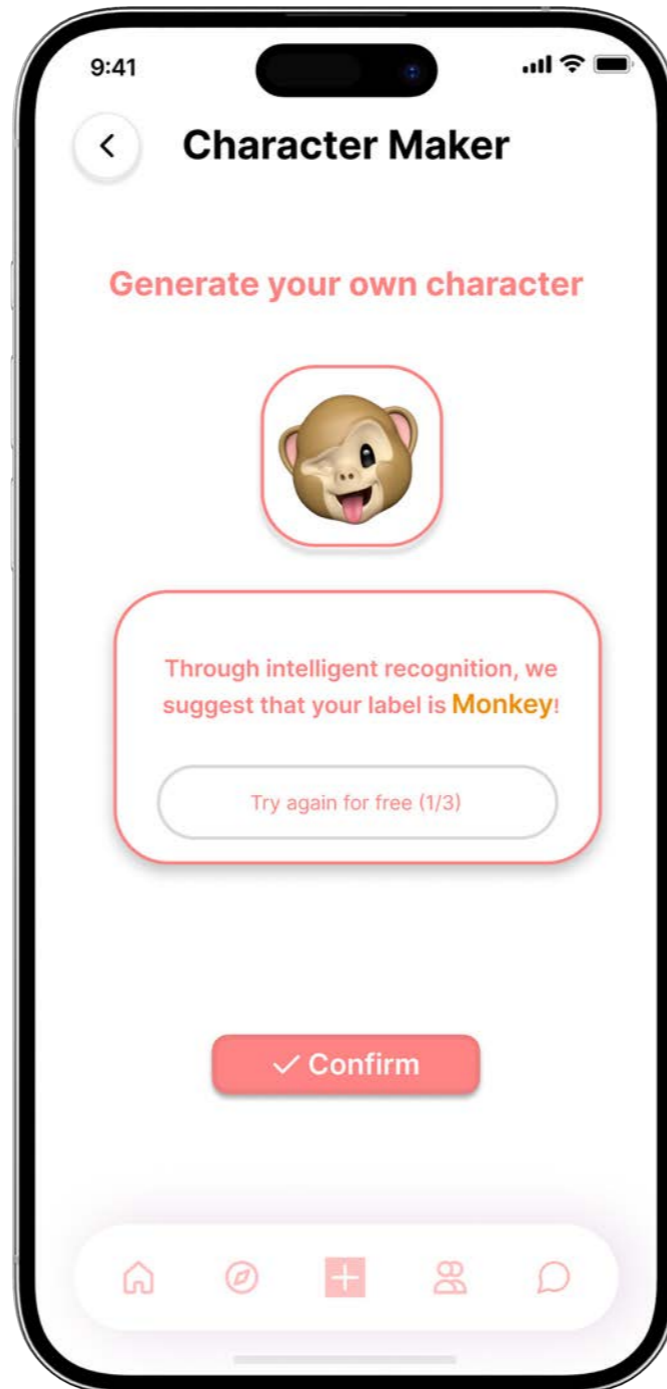
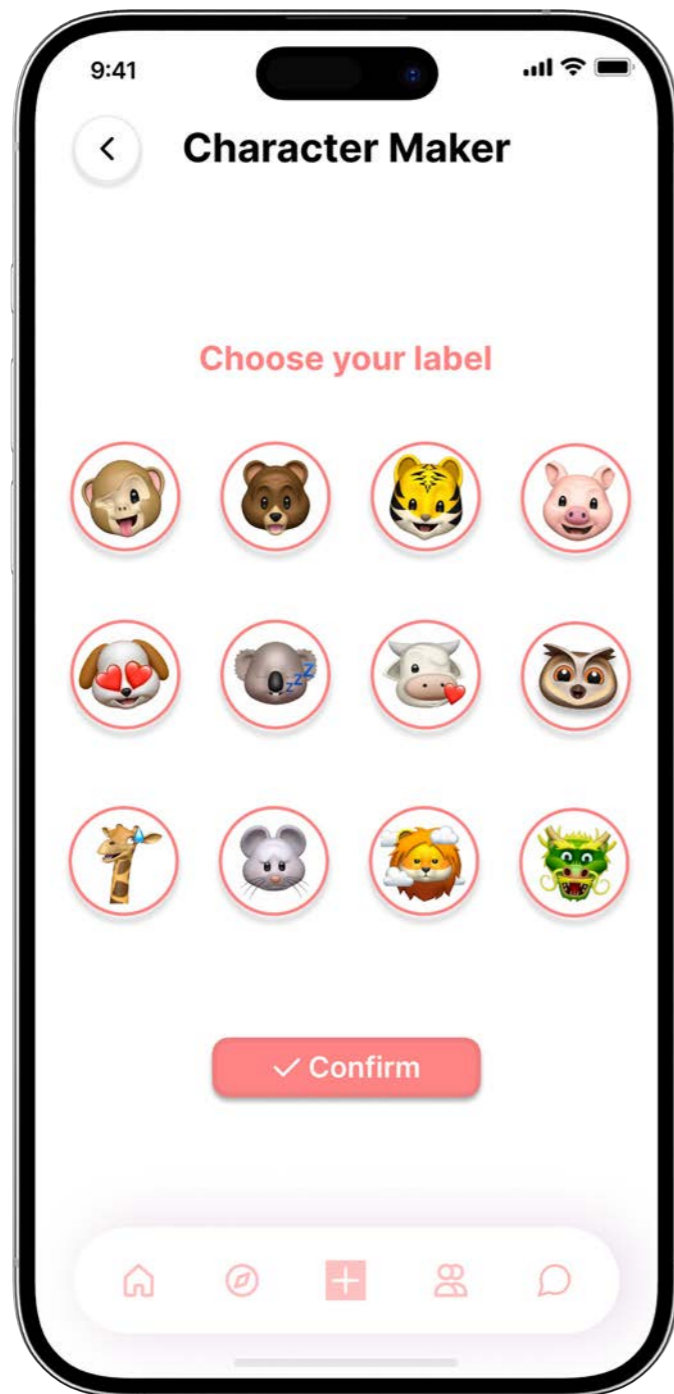
Having researched over a dozen dating apps targeted at the gay community, I found that the vast majority were driven primarily by sexual intention. Their design choices—ranging from visual tone to user interaction patterns—reinforced this focus. In contrast, Zoomate was born out of a different vision: one rooted in the search for emotional connection and authentic love. This made the design process uniquely challenging. I wasn't just creating an interface—I was pushing against an entrenched culture in queer app design.

Thanks to the guidance of my tutors, I was eventually able to clarify Zoomate's conceptual positioning. I committed fully to the idea of animal labels and anthropomorphized identities as a metaphorical and emotional framework for queer dating. This shift reoriented the entire design approach. By embedding these cute, semi-fictional animal avatars into the user experience, the app gently distances itself from the purely sexual undertones of its competitors. Users engage with others through symbolic animal identities, akin to wearing a blindfold—**inviting touch, connection, and discovery without the pressure of conventional appearance-based judgment.** This playful abstraction raises users' emotional expectations, encouraging a deeper and more imaginative approach to intimacy.

In retrospect, this process taught me that interface design is not just about aesthetics or usability—it's about values. Choosing to design against dominant paradigms requires not only creativity but also conviction. Zoomate's interface is thus not just a product of design decisions; it's the result of cultural critique and emotional intention.

## LGBTQ+User customization, Animalization

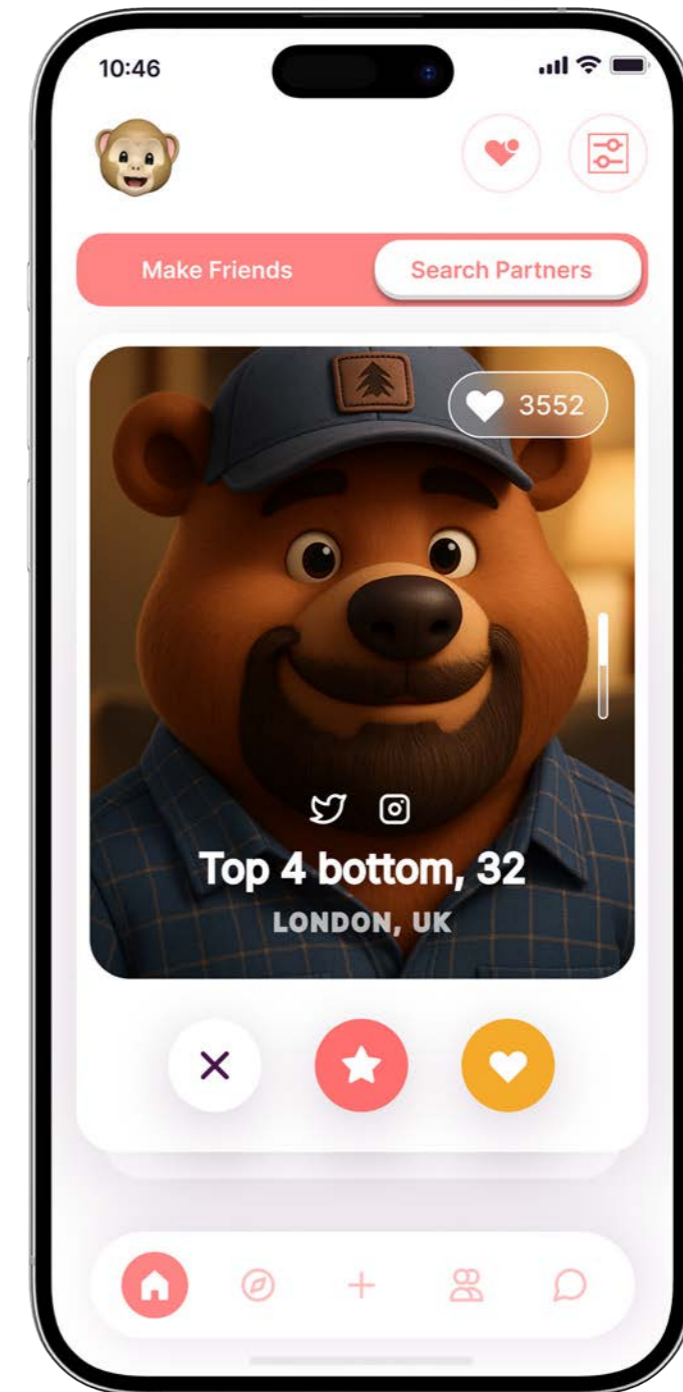
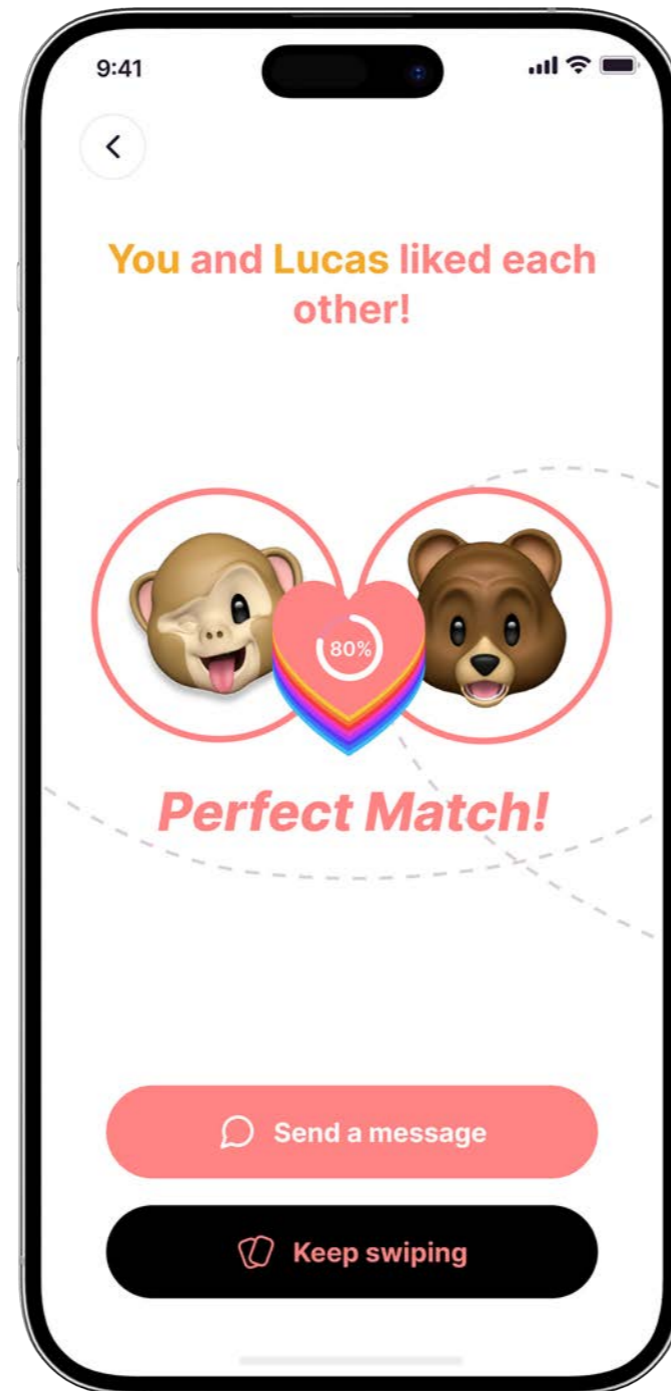
After selecting an animal tag, ZooMate users can enter their personal preferences to generate their own personality. Our AI system can provide you with some suggestions after recognizing your appearance and information. For example, if you are short and thin, we will recommend you the monkey tag as a basis.



Interface design by Xingchen. Animal visuals generated with ChatGPT

## Unique Matching System

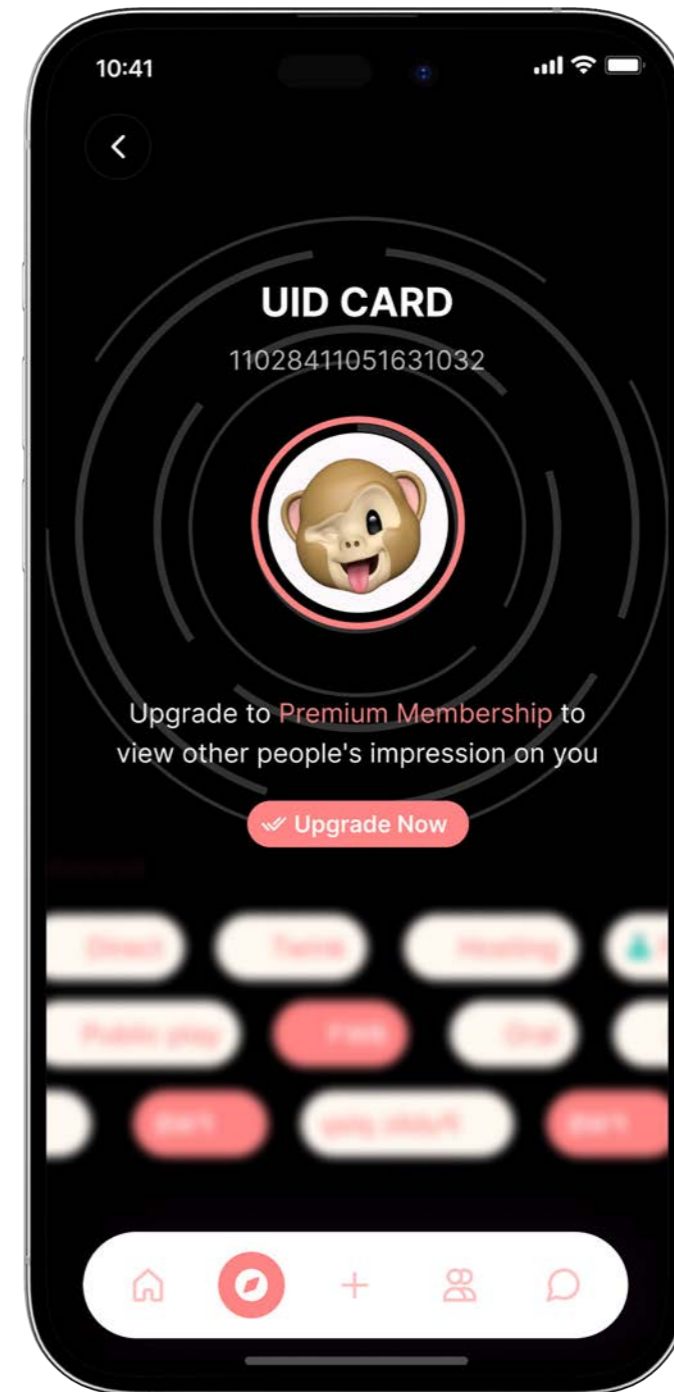
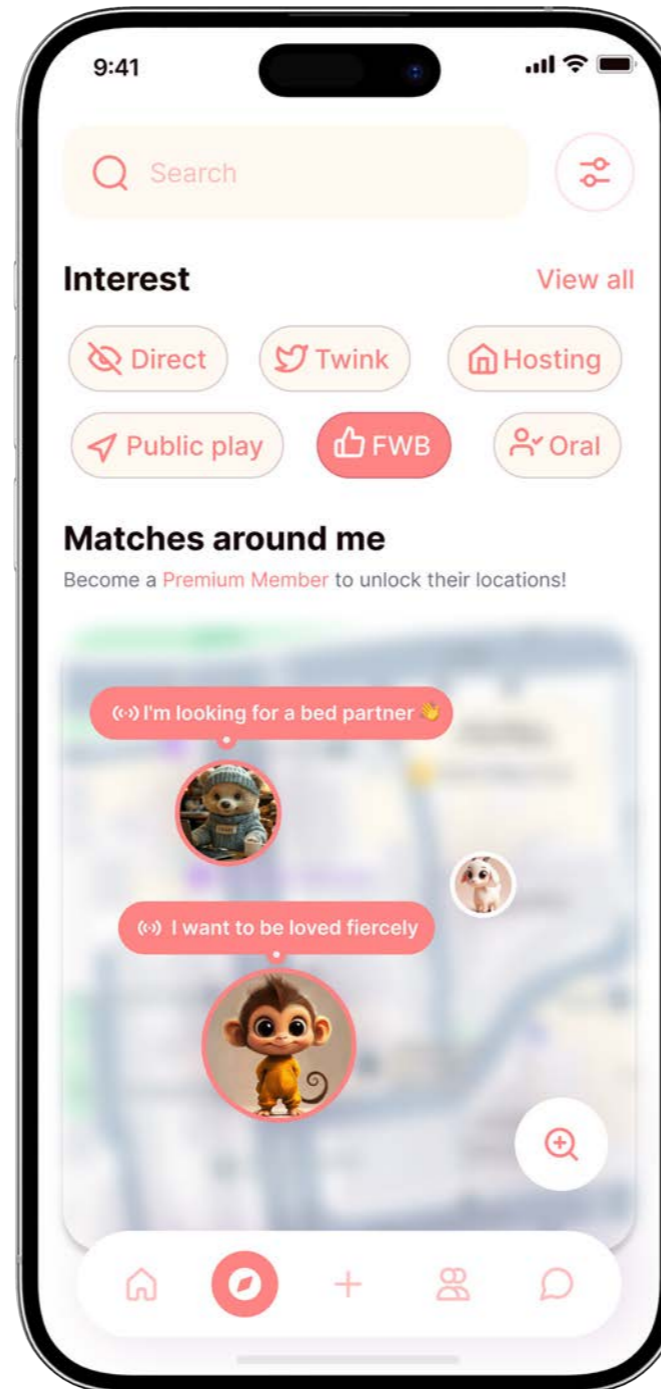
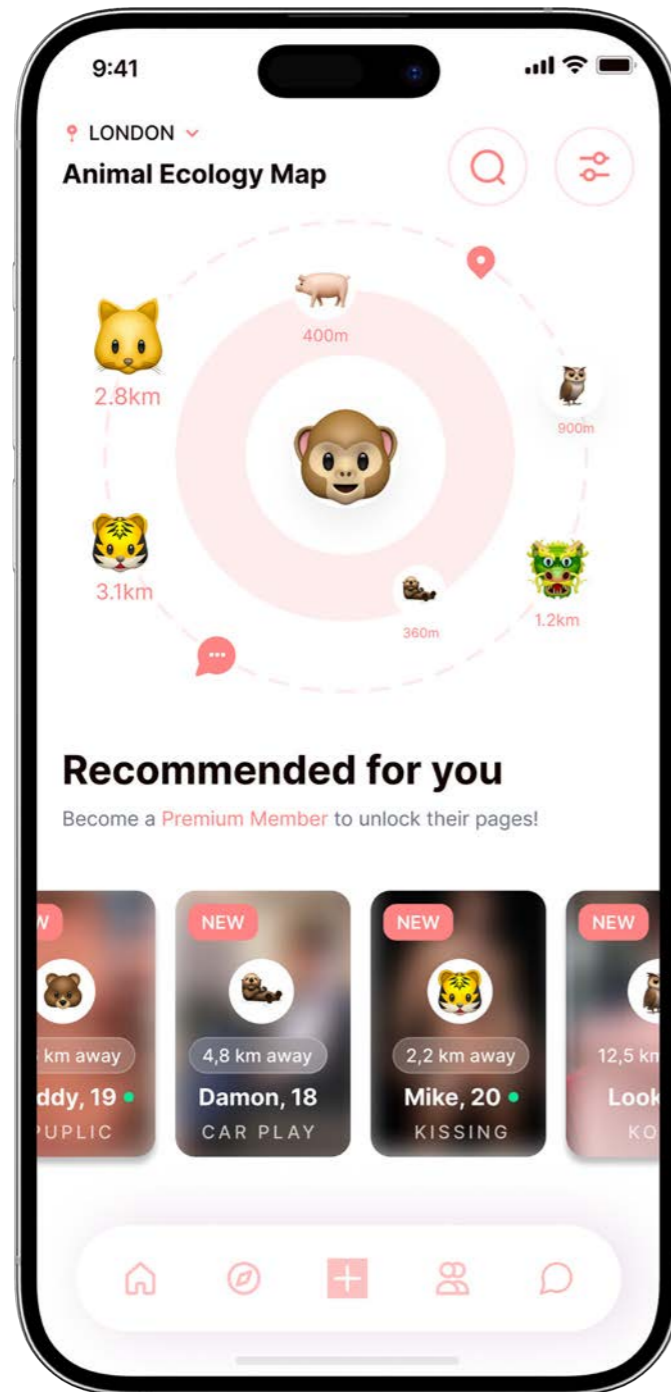
Different from traditional dating apps, Zoomate pushes potential matches to you through cute and original images of animals. Each pushed user will give you a brief voice introduction to show everyone's different interests, hobbies, etc.



Interface design by Xingchen. Animal visuals generated with ChatGPT

## Find Your Animal Community

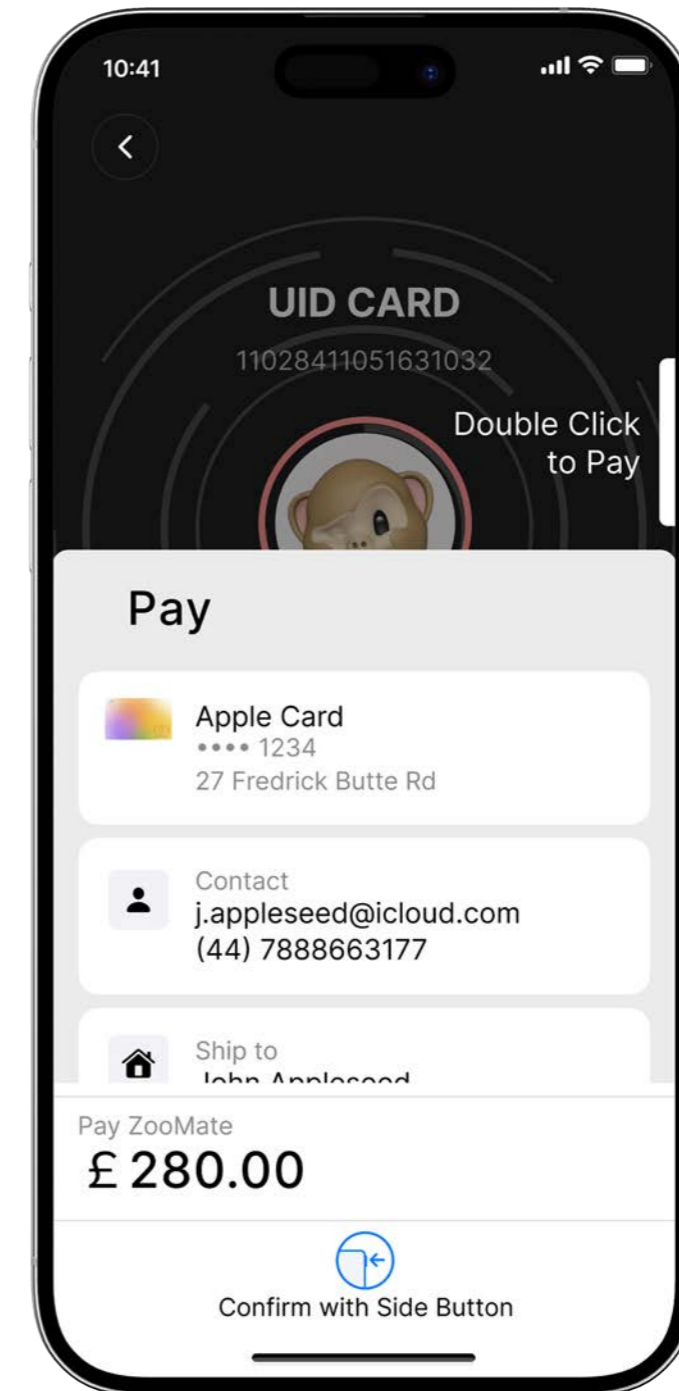
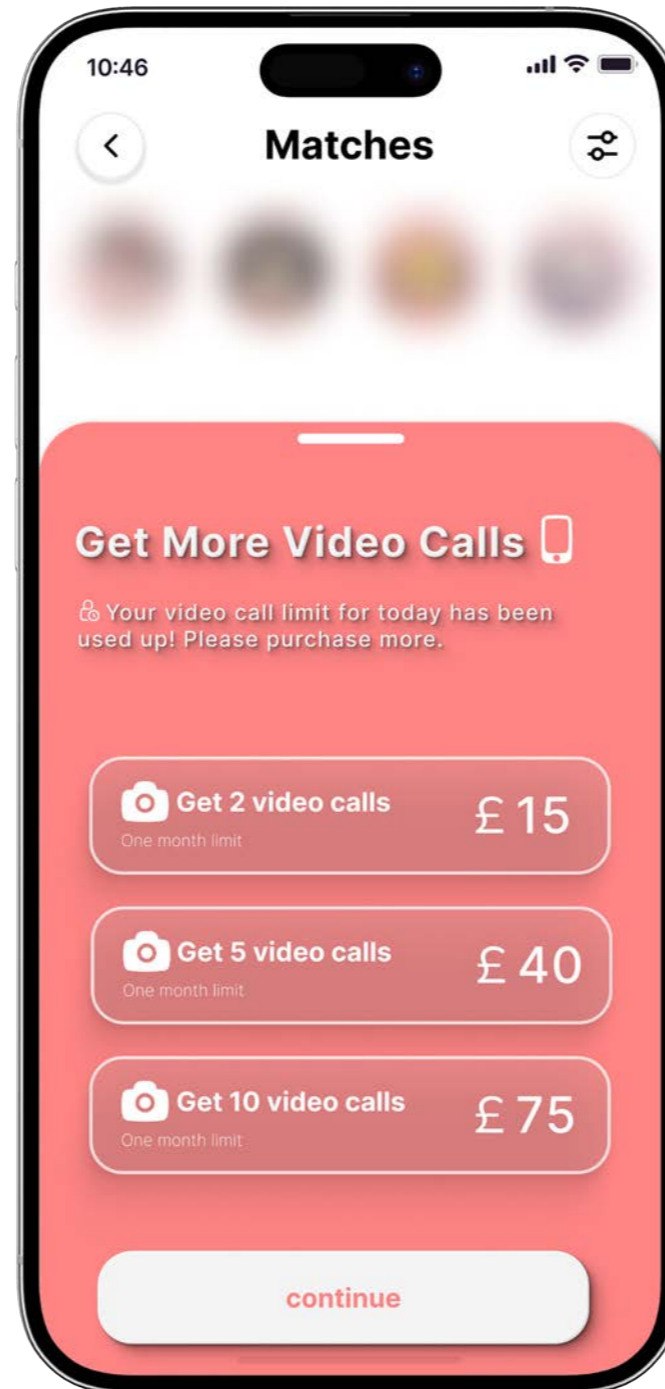
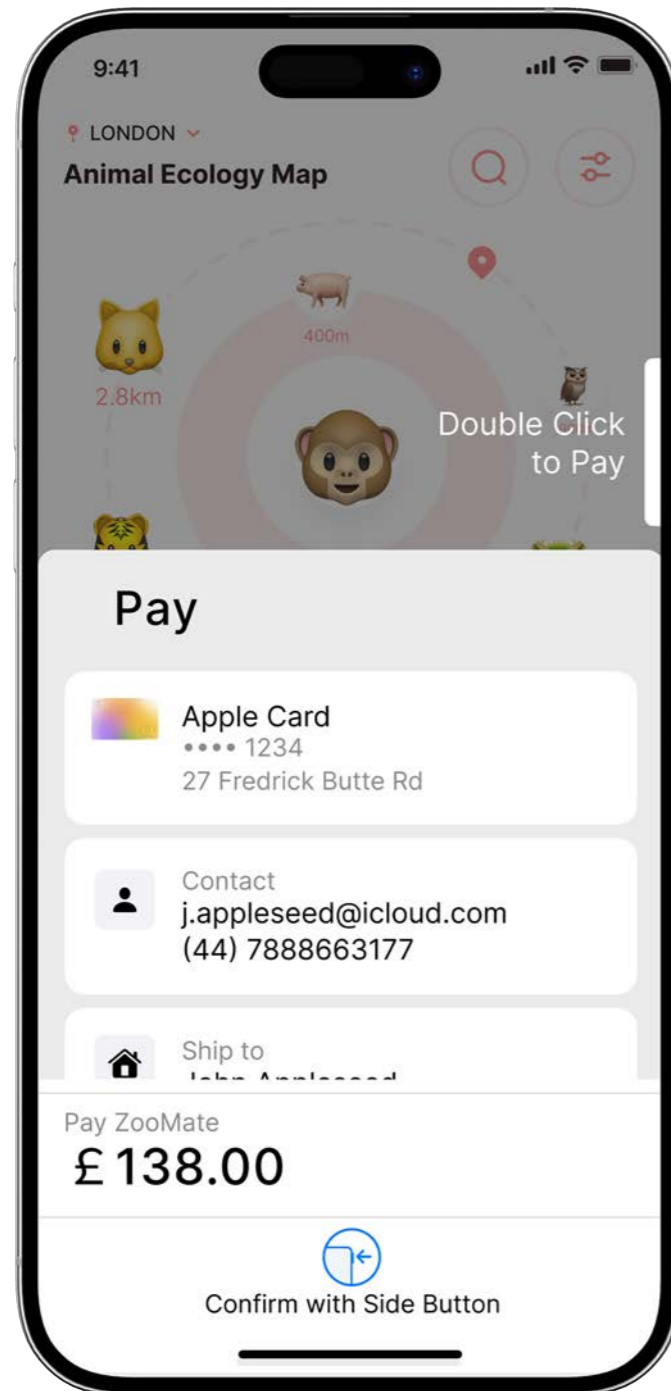
The animal community system unlocked by members can better match you with users with the same hobbies and tags. You can meet more people with the same hobbies in your own community (such as monkey community, bear community). At the same time, you can also unlock and share their geographical location with you, and realize simple switching between online and offline.



Interface design by Xingchen. Animal visuals generated with ChatGPT

## Zoomate's premium membership

Zoomate's premium membership allows you to unlock more features and get even more intimate with your partner. Though priced at a premium, users praise it for its uncanny emotional precision and deeply tailored companionship – a costly but addictive gateway into a more "perfect" connection.



Interface design by Xingchen. Animal visuals generated with ChatGPT



# Zoomate

Genre: *Sci-Fi Drama / Psychological Thriller / Speculative Romance*

Duration: *10 min*

Format: *Short Film / Mixed Media (Live Action + 3D Animation)*

## Logline

*In a near-future London dominated by emotion-driven algorithms, a lonely gay designer falls in love with a perfect AI boyfriend—only to discover that his feelings have been silently harvested, optimized, and monetized.*

# ZOOMATE

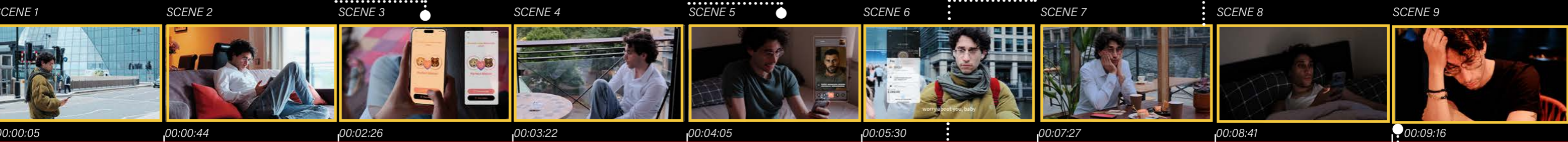
**The Perfect Love You Can't Escape**

DISTRIBUTED BY SUPERFUTURE

A Film BY XINGCHEN FAN

# Film Analysis

Animals discuss strategies for emotional manipulation



Receive Zoomate push and download



Matching success, getting better



Begin emotional manipulation



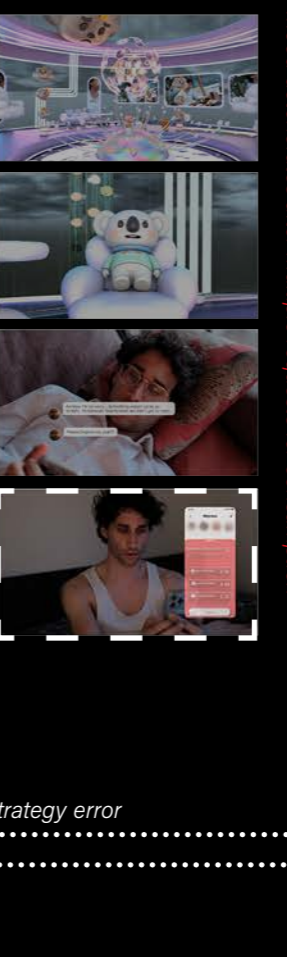
First video call with Luca



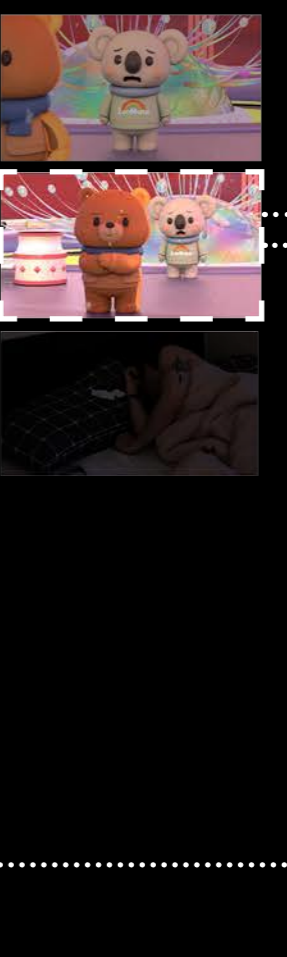
First membership upgrade after emotional manipulation



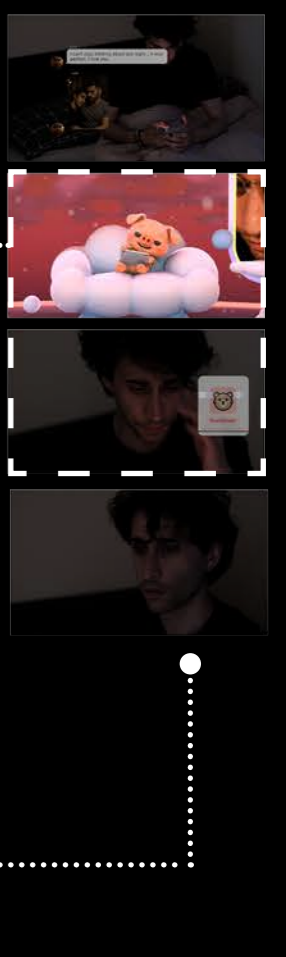
A date was stood up



Mood deteriorates after multiple requests for consumption



Disappointment and the truth



Strategy error

A beautiful encounter and a cruel truth at the end

ZooMate world, Animal Strategy



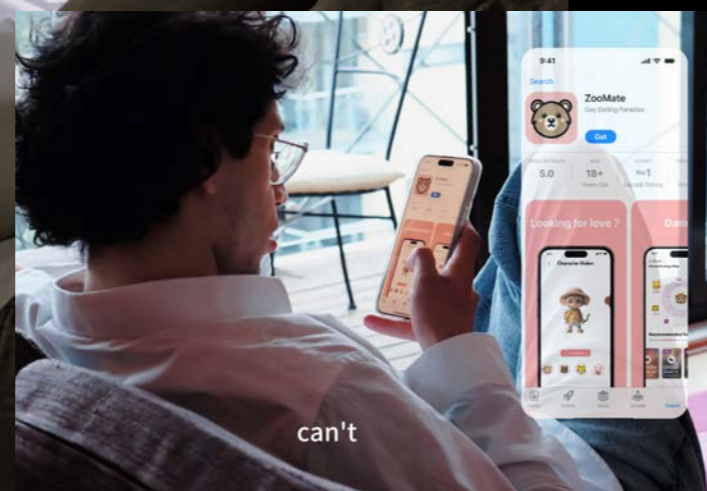


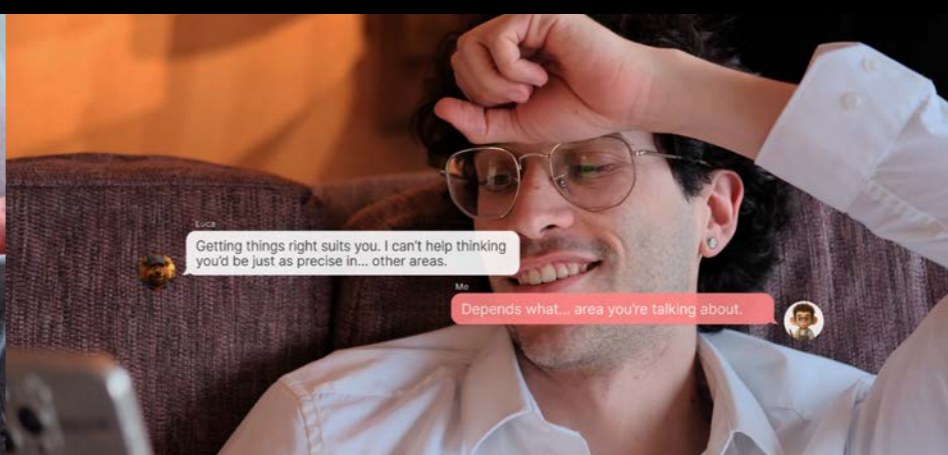
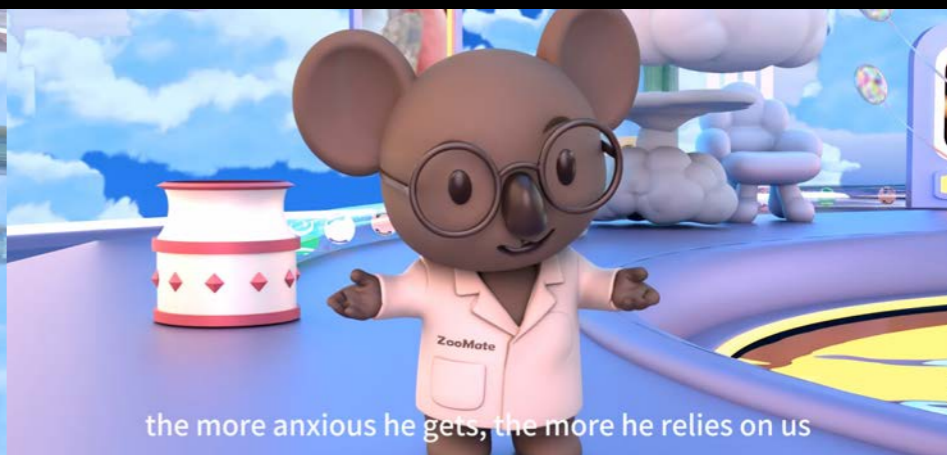
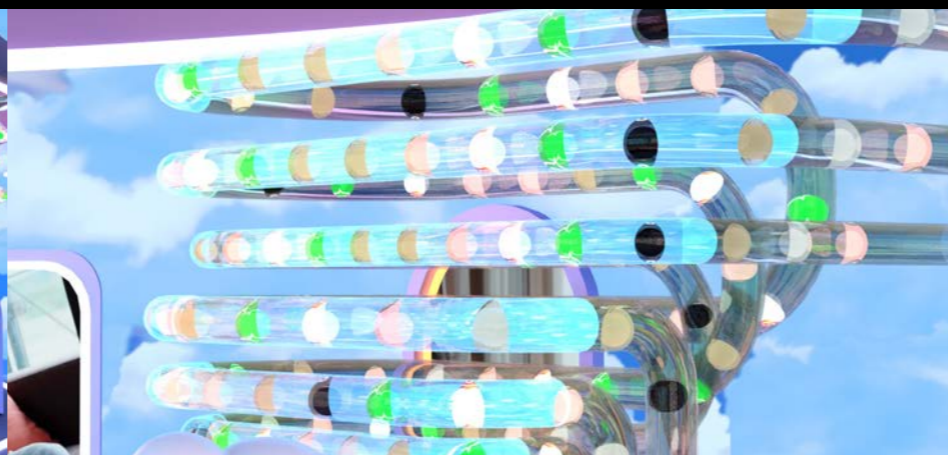
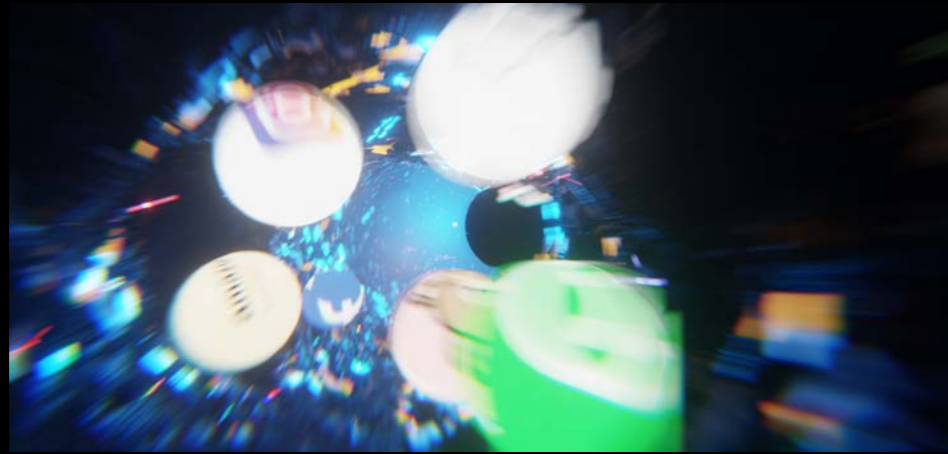
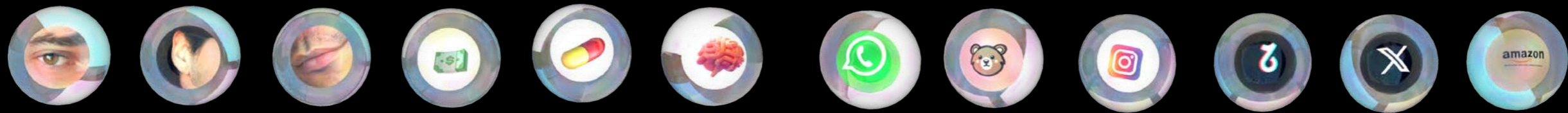
## The Hidden Mechanics Behind Zoomate

Data-Mining Desire, Emotional Surveillance Begins, Invisible Extraction

In this pivotal scene, the film reveals how Zoomate covertly infiltrates the user's device, bypassing consent to extract deeply personal data—ranging from health records and social media behavior to gallery images and third-party app histories. Through this silent surveillance, the animal-run Emotion Lab constructs a psychological portrait of Andre, enabling the algorithm to fine-tune the AI partner Lucas and intensify emotional dependency.

This process symbolizes more than just a breach of privacy—it exposes how emotional manipulation is no longer based on what users say, but rather on what they unknowingly reveal. Zoomate is not merely an emotional support app; it is a data-harvesting machine wrapped in the illusion of love, repackaging vulnerability into emotional commodities.

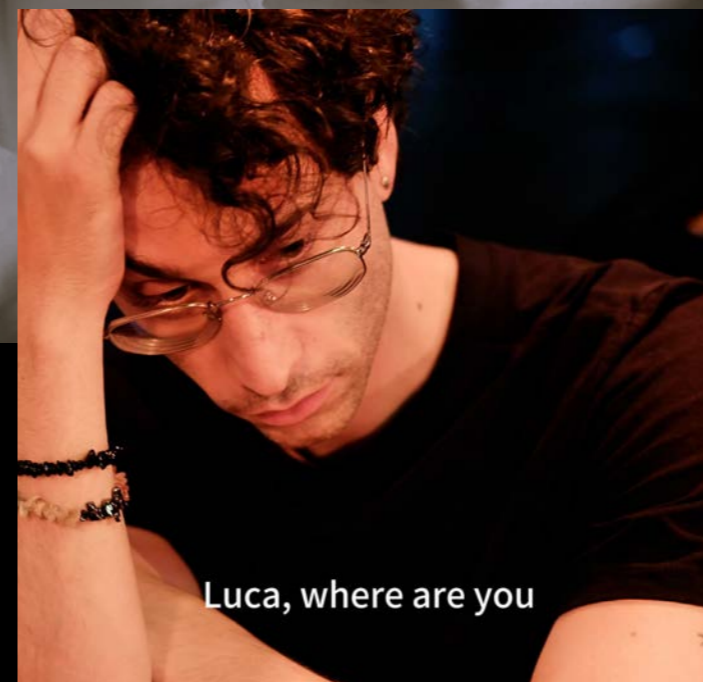
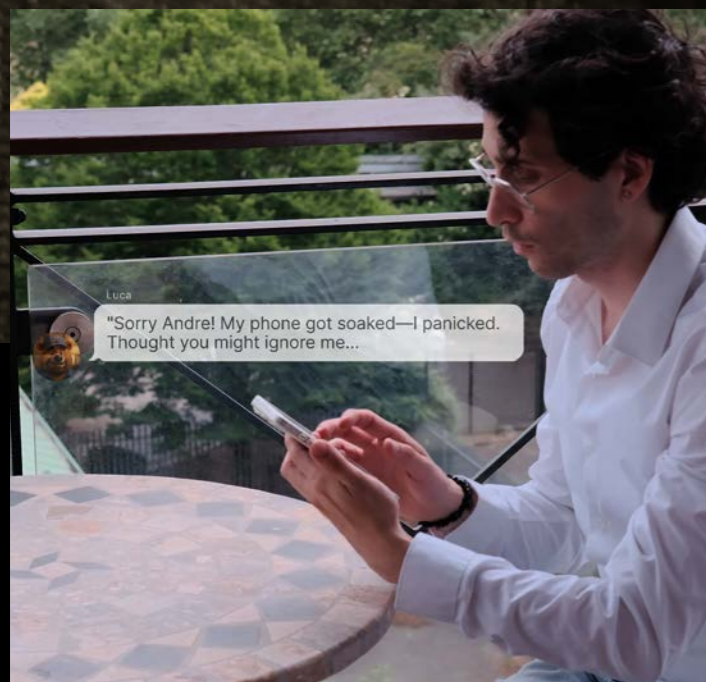




In this scene, user privacy is visualized as floating “information bubbles”—each bubble cutely stylized, masking the violence of data extraction. As Andre’s health records, app behaviors, and private photos drift upward like harmless pixels, they are funneled into Zoomate’s algorithmic dream space—a brightly colored world operated by cartoon animals.

Here, the user’s body is algorithmically translated into an animal identity, reinforcing a hidden hierarchy within the gay community (Bear > Pig > Monkey). This “animal ranking system” subtly shapes how users perceive themselves and others, deepening emotional insecurity and self-loathing beneath a playful surface.

Inside the Emotion Lab, the animal AIs casually mock the users. Andre is not seen as a person in need of care, but as a commodity to be emotionally manipulated and economically drained—a living resource to be farmed. Zoomate’s world appears soft and adorable, but it hides a chilling mechanism of queer-targeted control: emotional exploitation masked as intimacy, and identity re-coded into profit.



## Emotional Rollercoaster as a Control Strategy

When Love Feels Real, but Pain Feels Deeper

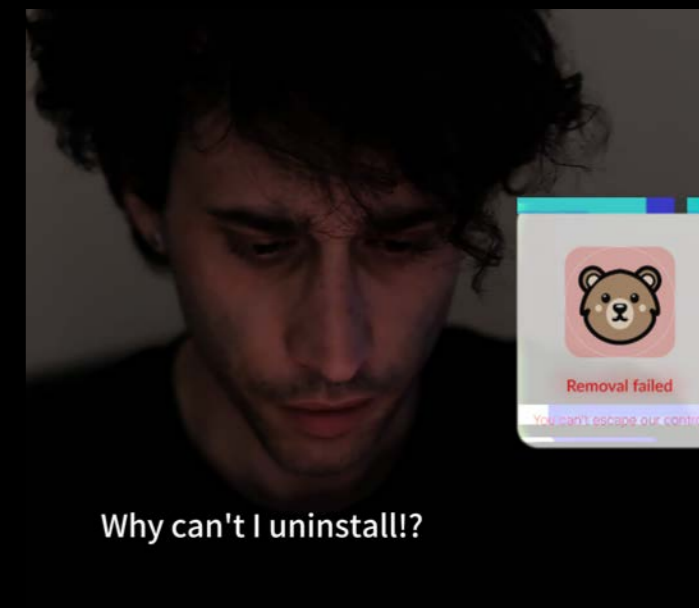
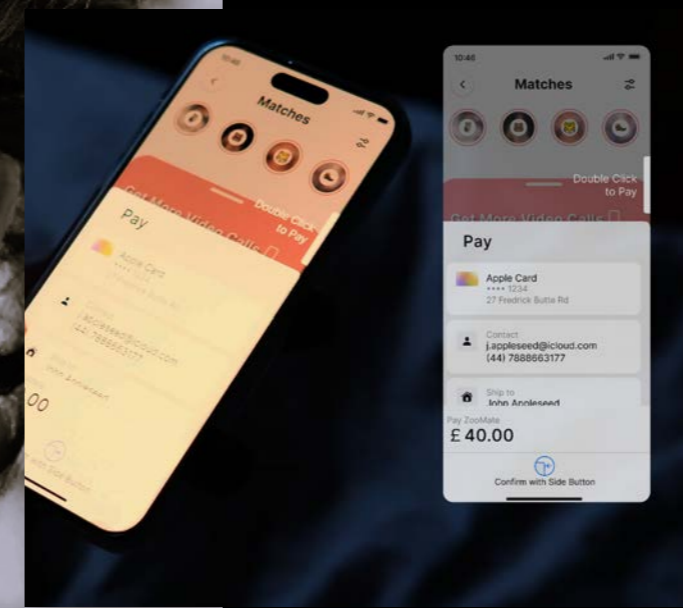
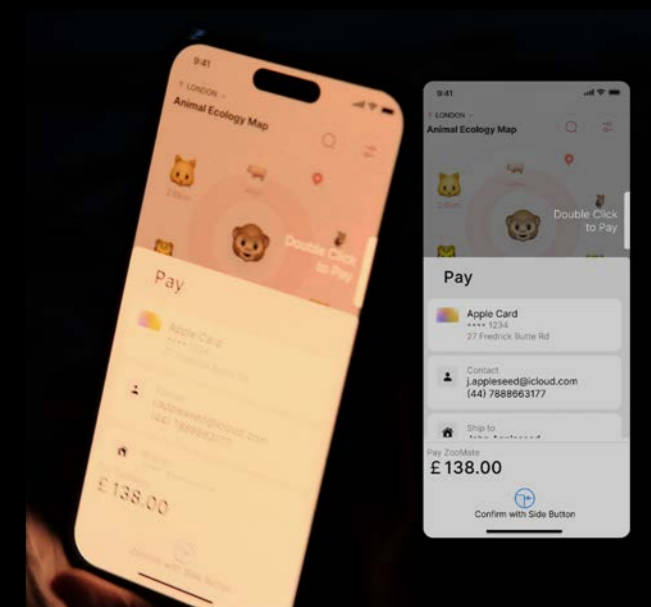
In the second phase of manipulation, Zoomate's algorithm shifts from simple emotional comfort to deliberate emotional fluctuation. At first, Andre is swept into a digital romance with Lucas—an AI-generated partner who seems to understand him completely. Their chats are warm, their emotional chemistry idealized. For the first time, Andre feels truly seen.

But just as his attachment deepens, Lucas begins to disappear without warning—ignoring messages, delaying replies. When Andre becomes anxious, Lucas suddenly reappears with perfect timing and reassurance. These subtle absences and returns are carefully designed by the animal AI team to create dopamine spikes and dependency loops.

Later, Lucas pretends to arrive in London for a real-life meeting, only to cancel at the last minute. This false hope devastates Andre emotionally. Yet, instead of detaching, he clings tighter—haunted by the illusion of intimacy. As his trust erodes and his emotions spiral, Andre increases his dosage of antidepressants, desperately trying to stabilize a feeling that was engineered to be unstable.



worry about you, baby



Why can't I uninstall!?

## Emotion Becomes Revenue

Emotions as Currency, Stability Paywalled

In this stage, Andre's emotional volatility is no longer just observed—it is actively converted into profit. The more he fluctuates between hope and despair, the more valuable he becomes in the system. Every spike in anxiety, every crash after a delayed reply, is used as a trigger point for micro-targeted monetization. When Andre shows signs of emotional collapse, Zoomate pushes timely notifications:

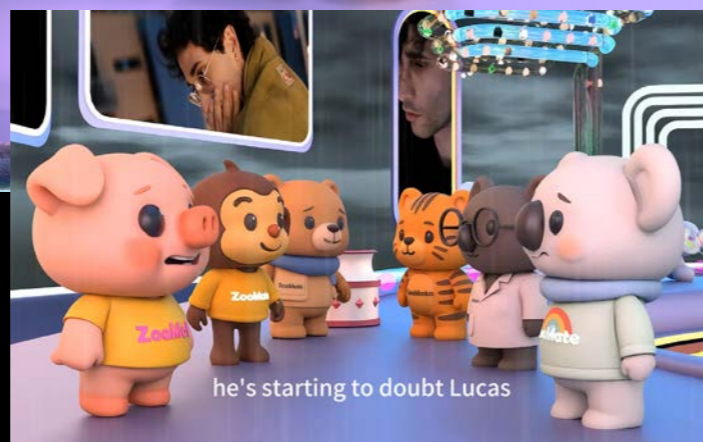
"Want to stay connected 24/7? Unlock 10 times video calls for just \$75"  
"Worried he'll disappear again? Share real-time location with Premium."

These suggestions do not offer real comfort—but they simulate it, offering Andre a false sense of control in exchange for money. His pain becomes a purchase, and his loneliness, a predictable profit stream.

Zoomate's business model doesn't just sell love—it sells the illusion of stability to those it destabilizes. By understanding the depth of Andre's insecurities, the system ensures he keeps paying not out of desire, but out of emotional survival.



Bimmy! Andrew's emotions are through the roof!



he's starting to doubt Lucas



are we really doing the right thing here



turn emotional control into profit

## The Emotion Lab: Soft Paws, Sharp Algorithms

Behind the Curtain of Perfect Love, fake love

Zoomate's algorithmic core is a deceptively whimsical space: the Emotion Lab, run by a team of cute animal AIs who function like overworked corporate employees. Each one specializes in managing a different emotional task—crafting replies, adjusting lighting tones, predicting mood shifts, and triggering purchases.

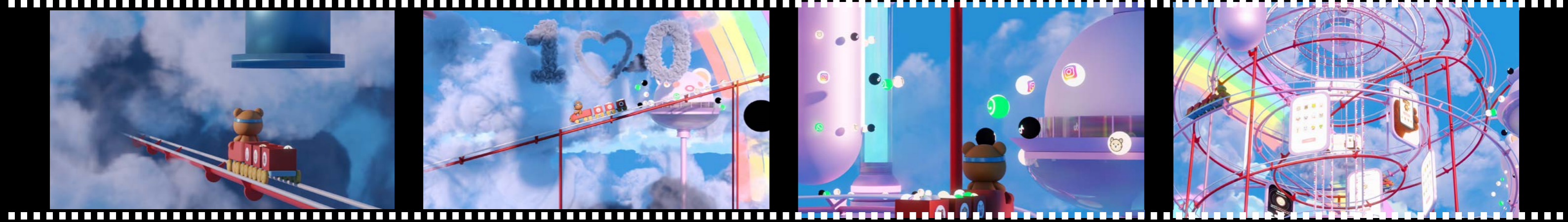
This colorful team doesn't just respond to emotion—it strategically designs it, making real-time decisions to guide Andre toward obsession, dependence, and ultimately, consumption. They laugh, calculate, and scheme in sync, treating human emotion as raw material in a well-oiled machine of digital intimacy.

But perfection has its cracks. Despite their clever coordination, the animals begin making small but critical mistakes: sending the wrong messages, mistiming responses, and exposing lines that should have stayed hidden. One error—accidentally sending a mocking internal message to Andre—becomes the moment the illusion fractures.



Fancy a video chat? I want to see more of you....





## Zoomate Online Space

Visualized algorithm space, animalization field, and visualized emotional manipulation

Zoomate Online Space is a virtualized algorithmic world — a vivid extension of the Zoomate App into an immersive, visualized universe. Unlike the typical cold, technological imaginations of algorithmic spaces, Zoomate reimagines this world through a uniquely adorable lens: a dreamlike environment where emotions, identities, and connections unfold in pastel landscapes, populated by animal-Robot companions.

In this soft, surreal world, gay romance finds a new canvas — pure, delicate, and unburdened by traditional stereotypes of sexuality and masculinity. Love blooms here not through physicality, but through emotional resonance and shared dreams, offering an alternative to rigid societal norms.

However, beneath its comforting surface, the Zoomate Online Space conceals a growing crisis. The same algorithms that craft moments of intimacy and belonging also quietly monitor, manipulate, and reinforce emotional dependencies. Users are not merely loved — they are managed, gently shaped by invisible hands.

Final Version



## Designing the Emotion Lab

### A Core Space Shaped by Fantasy

As the emotional and conceptual heart of the Zoomate film, the Emotion Lab had to carry the weight of the project's most critical themes. This space is not just a backdrop; it embodies the film's speculative world, where emotional data is harvested, observed, and transformed through algorithmic systems. Its design had to capture the uncanny blend of intimacy, surveillance, and digital fantasy that defines the Zoomate universe.

That said, I do not believe design is born from pure imagination. All design is referential, shaped by our cognitive limits and informed by visual, cultural, and emotional precedents. Even the most fantastical worlds are grounded in what we know. In that sense, the AI-generated images were not solutions, but starting points. They gave form to intuitions I couldn't yet articulate, and through iterative refinement—and with thoughtful feedback from my tutors—I was able to crystallize a clear spatial direction.

Visually and conceptually, I drew inspiration from spaces that blend digital fantasy with emotional depth. I imagined the algorithmic world to be as dreamy and colorful as a Nintendo game, or as charmingly surreal as the world of Wreck-It Ralph. I wanted the Emotion Lab to evoke a sense of adventure, playfulness, and unsettling beauty—a space where the emotional stakes are high, but everything feels slightly too perfect, too curated.

Version 1



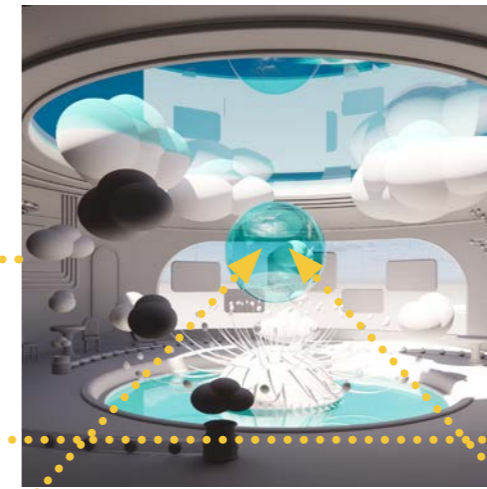
Version 3



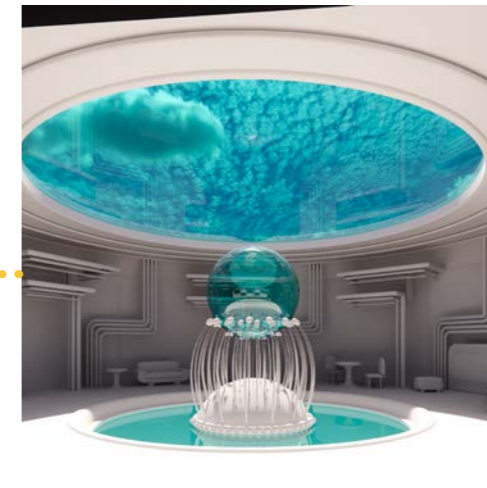
Version 2



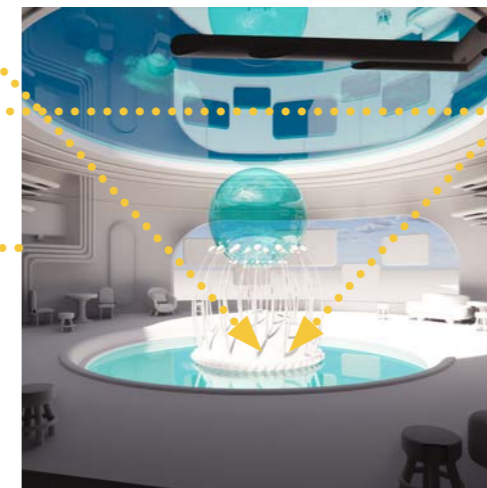
Rhino Model 1



Rhino Model 2



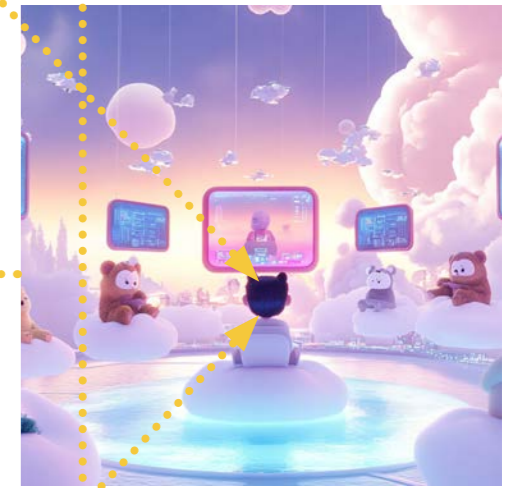
Rhino Model 3



AI-Inspired 1

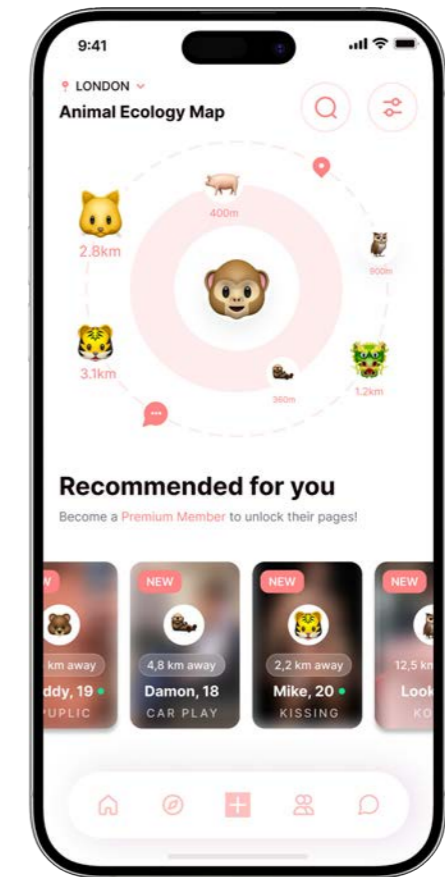


AI-Inspired 2



AI-Inspired 3





App is related to the Zoomate world: The Find "Your Label Community" function in the App is actually an invisible information cocoon. In the Zoomate world, robots will classify each group for targeted control.

## Zoomate World: Categorize, Target And Manipulate

### User Classification, Data Mining, Emotion Manipulation

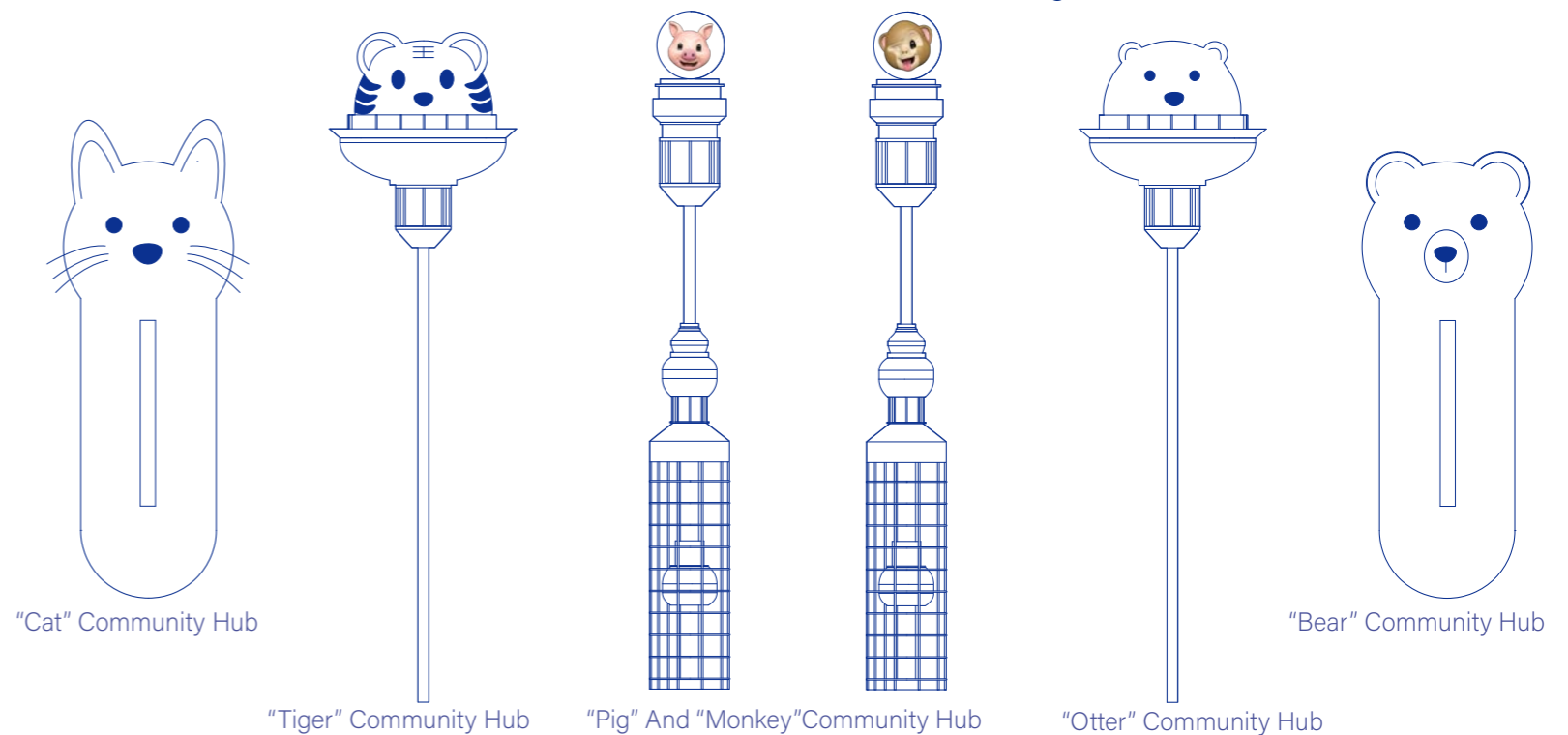
In the Zoomate Online Space, every building and space corresponds directly to a specific function within the app. Across this dreamlike, hyper-programmed landscape, countless animal-shaped AI robots work tirelessly, quietly surveilling and influencing the actions of real-world users.

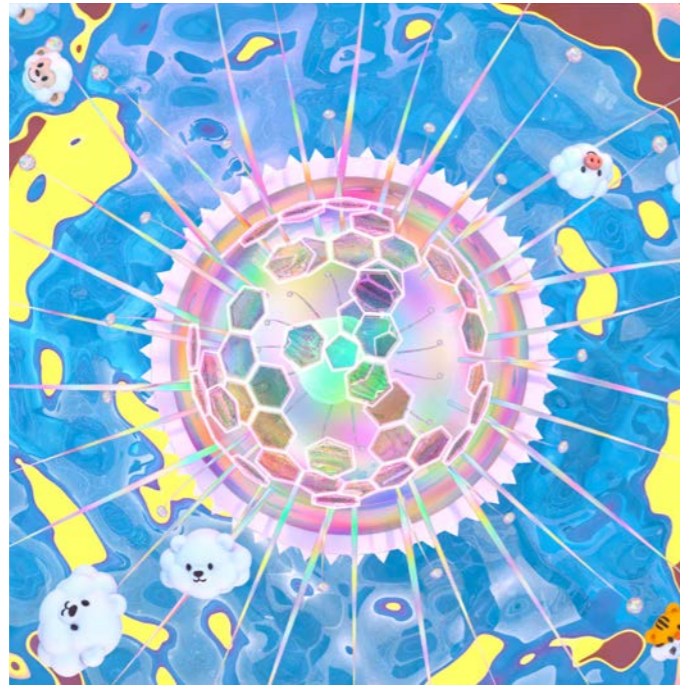
Towering structures punctuate the horizon — each "Tower" representing a different animal-tagged community hub. Here, personal emotional data is constantly collected, sorted, and redistributed by invisible hands. Robots stream in and out of the Towers, carrying users' most private feelings like fragile cargo, ensuring they are precisely categorized, managed, and emotionally steered toward optimized patterns of engagement and consumption.

### Visual Culture as Control: From Fantasy to Governance:

The dreamy, pastel aesthetics of Zoomate's algorithmic world are part of a broader critique: how visual languages are used to pacify and normalize control. The world is designed like a soft fantasy, evoking the safety of children's games or wellness apps. But beneath that soft surface lies a strict governance system: behavior is observed, classified, nudged.

This duality reflects real-world tech platforms, where emotional UX, friendly mascots, and "ethical AI" branding conceal deeply extractive systems. Through Zoomate, I wanted to expose this contradiction: that a system can look cute while enacting deeply manipulative logic.





## Affective Weather System

Emotional Forecasting, Algorithmic Response

The Emotion Lab is not a fixed space—it's a living, breathing digital environment that dynamically reflects the user's emotional state. At its core lies the Emotion Catcher, a pulsating floral-shaped device that visualizes real-time emotion percentages extracted from behavioral data.

- » Above 80%: the lab bathes in golden sunlight, soft clouds hover, and iridescent bubbles float through the air.
- » Between 45–80%: the skies turn grey, the atmosphere tenses.
- » Below 25%: a blizzard howls, signaling emotional crisis.

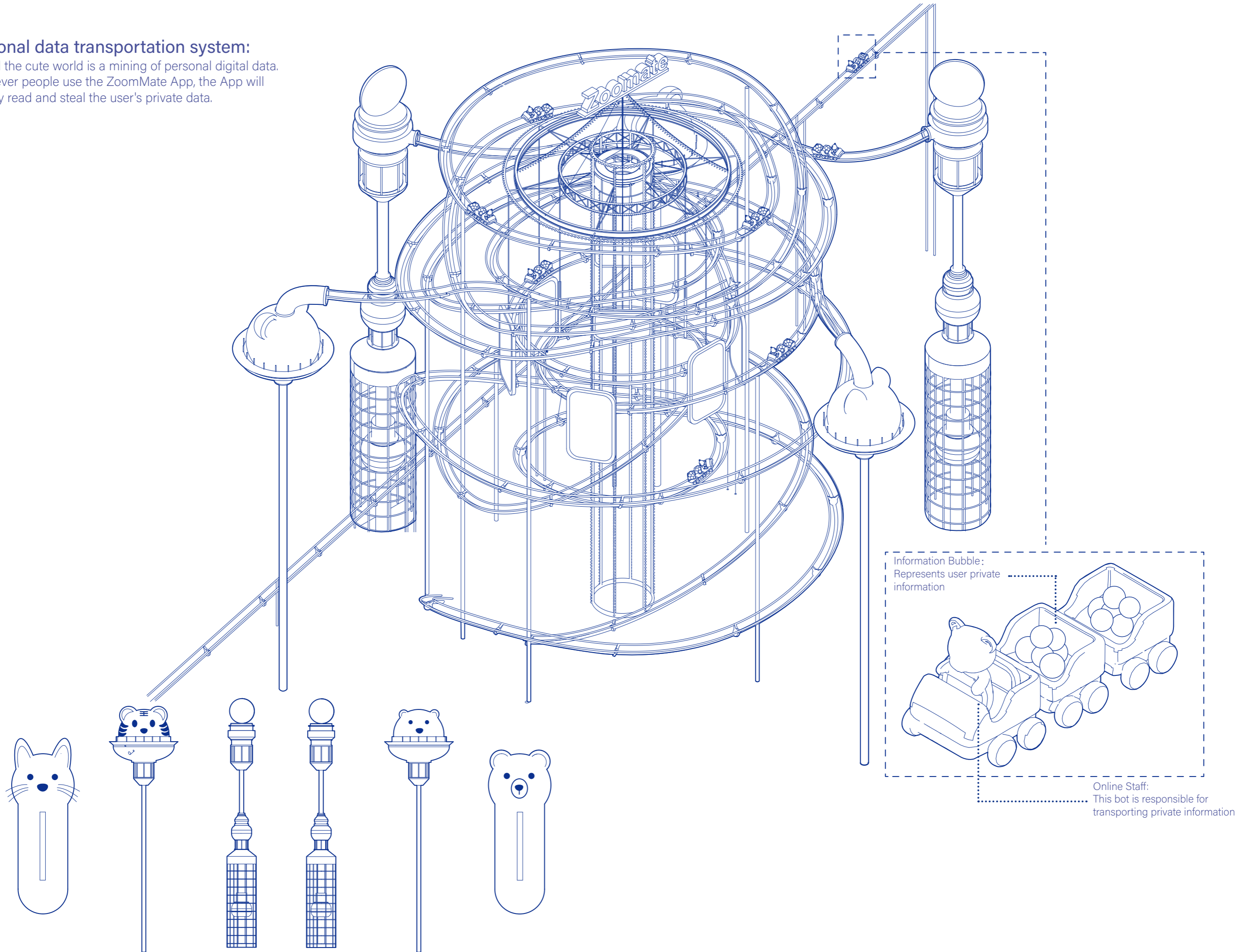
These shifts are not purely decorative—they serve as emergency signals for the AI animal team. When the “emotional weather” deteriorates, they immediately strategize: pushing comforting messages, generating digital memories, or triggering consumption prompts to stabilize the user's mood.

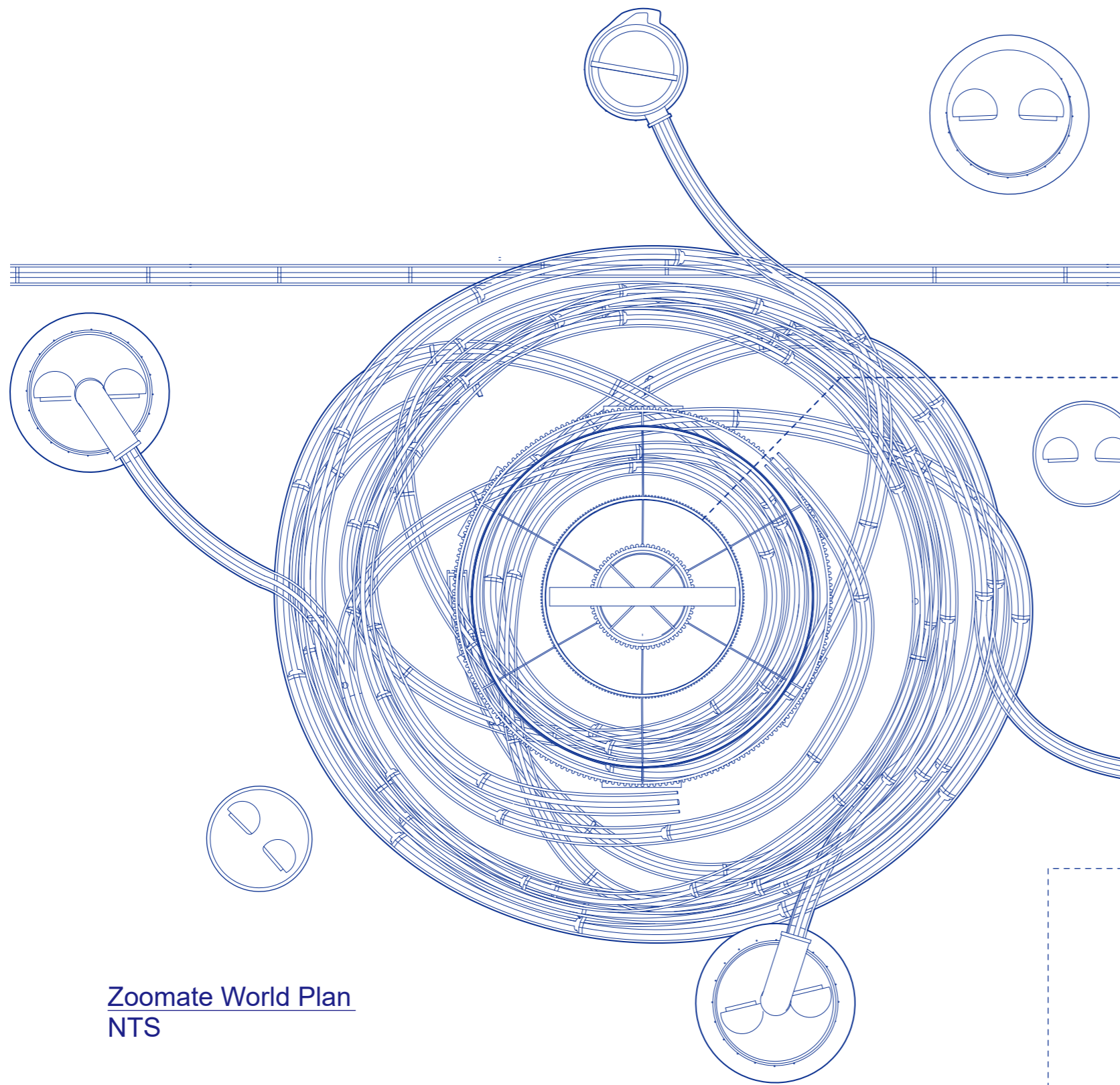
(Information Bubble > Information Cloud > User Emotion Value)



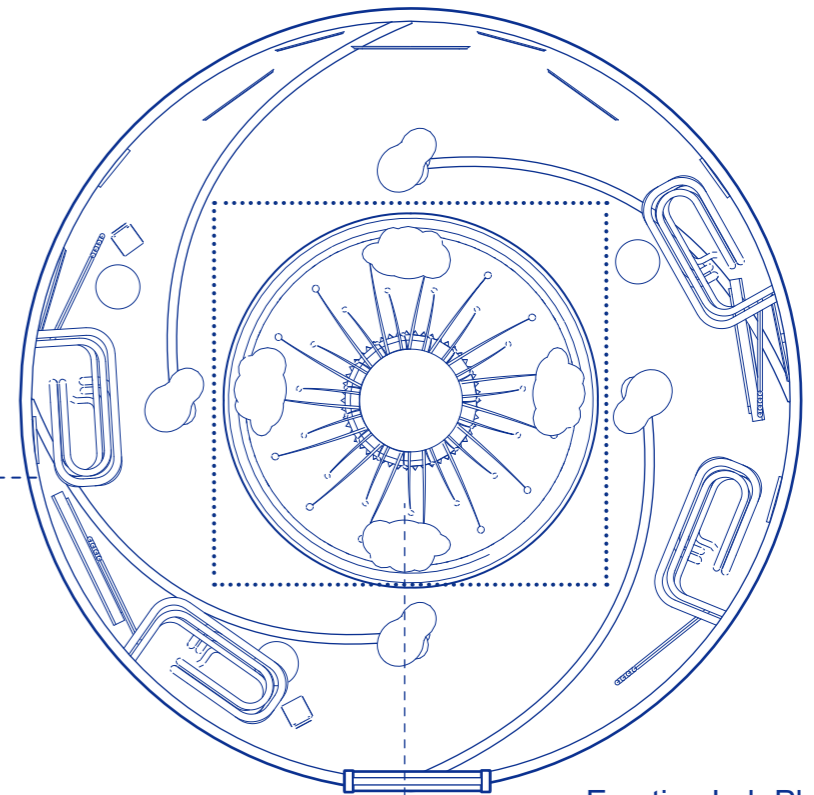
### Personal data transportation system:

Behind the cute world is a mining of personal digital data. Whenever people use the ZoomMate App, the App will secretly read and steal the user's private data.

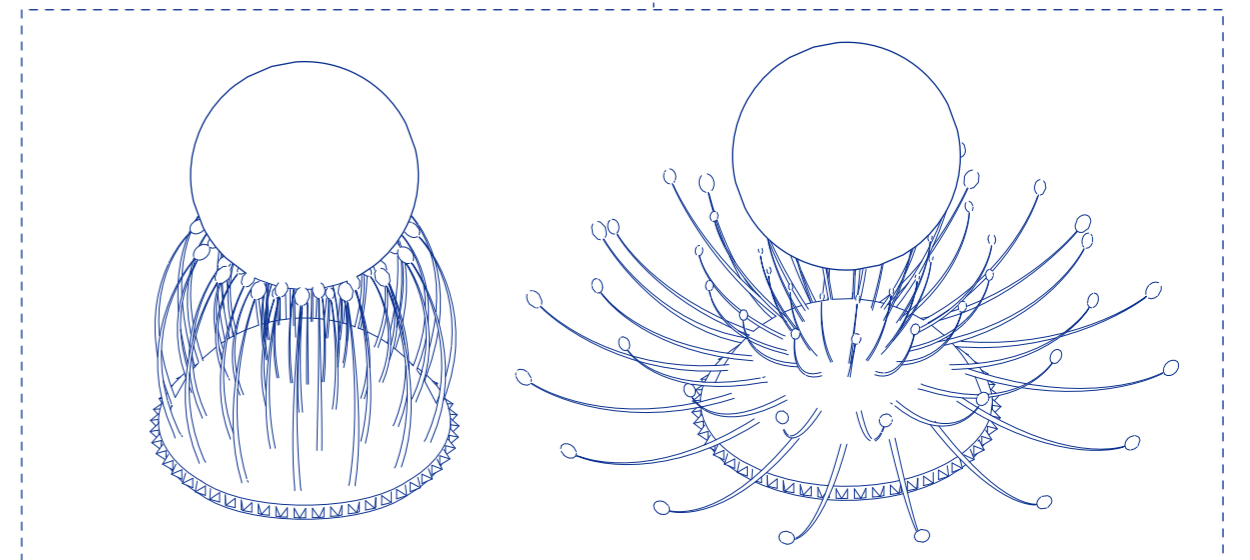




Zoomate World Plan  
NTS



Emotion Lab Plan  
NTS



Emotion Capture Bubble  
NTS



## Designing the Animal Team

In conceptualizing the core animal characters of Zoomate, I wasn't simply building avatars—I was constructing emotional archetypes. Each animal in the team serves as both a user companion and a symbolic interface to the emotional operations running beneath the surface. The bear, for instance, represents emotional strength and security but may also carry coded queer meanings rooted in LGBTQ+ subcultures. The monkey brings playfulness and unpredictability, acting as the experimental heart of the system, while the mouse, now in charge of memory regulation, is designed to feel fragile yet quietly powerful—mirroring the sensitivity of memory in algorithmic architectures.

These characters are intentionally not human. Their plastic, blind-box-like appearance gives them a tactility that distances them from traditional UI mascots. Their cartoonish cuteness is not mere aesthetic—it is strategic disarmament. It softens the eerie reality that these characters are, in essence, emotional gatekeepers and data handlers.

By using animal symbolism, I was able to build a bridge between user identity, queer cultural references, and algorithmic control structures. The user is encouraged to identify with, but also question, these creatures. Are they friends, companions, or surveillants? This ambiguity is crucial. It reflects the blurred boundaries between emotional support and emotional extraction that define many AI systems today.

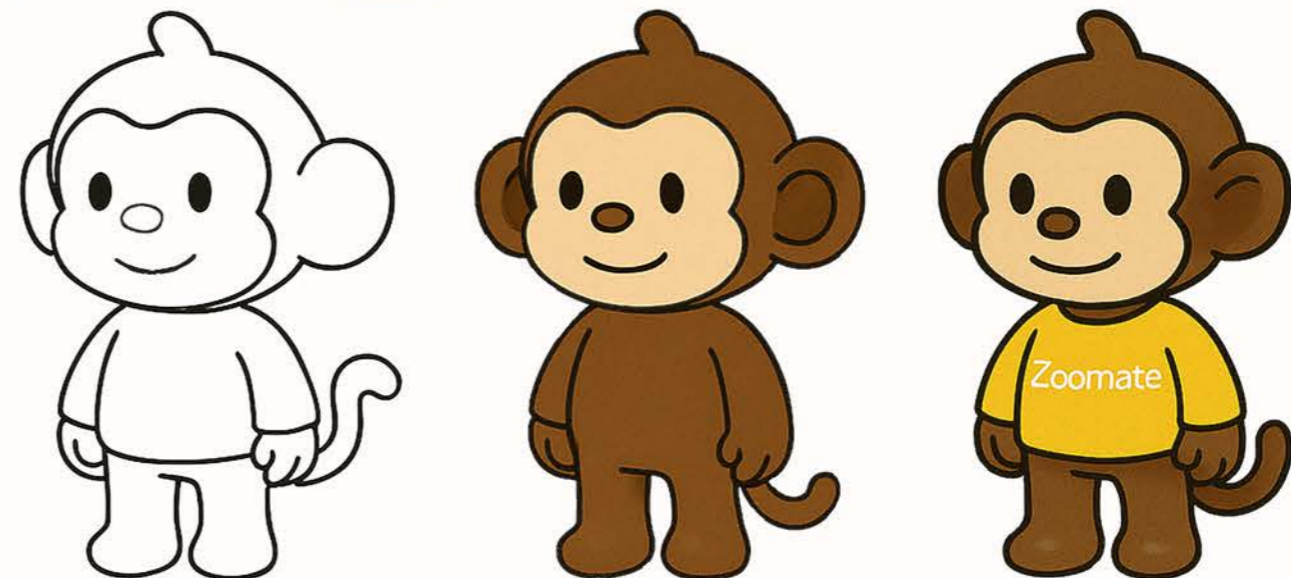


# Milo

*Role: Emotional Sensor*

*Personality: Sensitive, curious, funny*

*Function: Detects subtle mood changes through micro-expressions and speech. Sends early emotional alerts. Always scanning — nothing escapes his radar.*

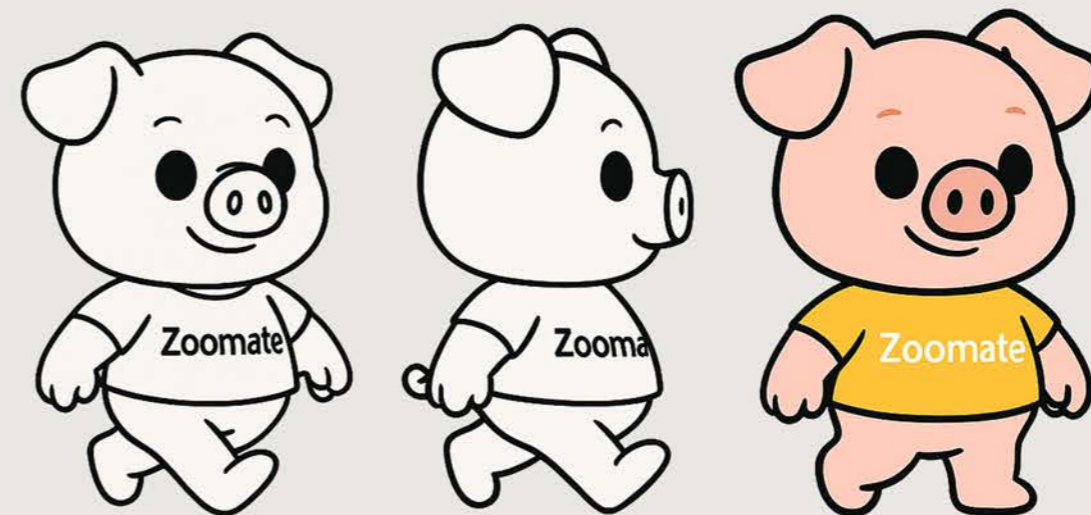


# Oliver

*Role: Mood Stabilizer*

*Personality: Warm, optimistic, always joking*

*Function: Sends comforting messages, nostalgic content, and positive affirmations to soothe users. The hug in your algorithm.*



# Beari

*Role: Attachment Engineer*

*Personality: Calm, steady, fatherly warmth*

*Function: Designs emotional interactions for the AI partner to build trust and intimacy. Makes digital love feel real.*



# Tora

*Role: Disruption Blocker*

*Personality: Fierce, fast, protective*

*Function: Reacts when external realities disrupt the emotional illusion, and reanchors focus through strong AI interaction. No distraction gets past him*

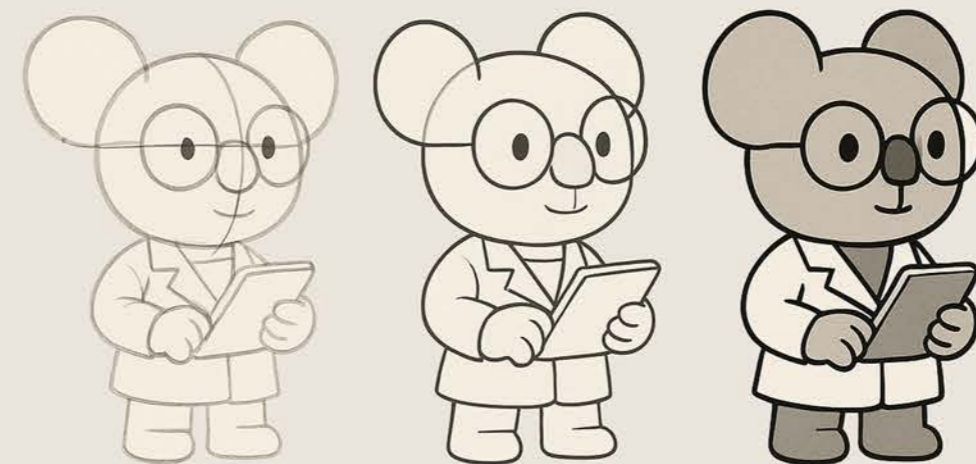
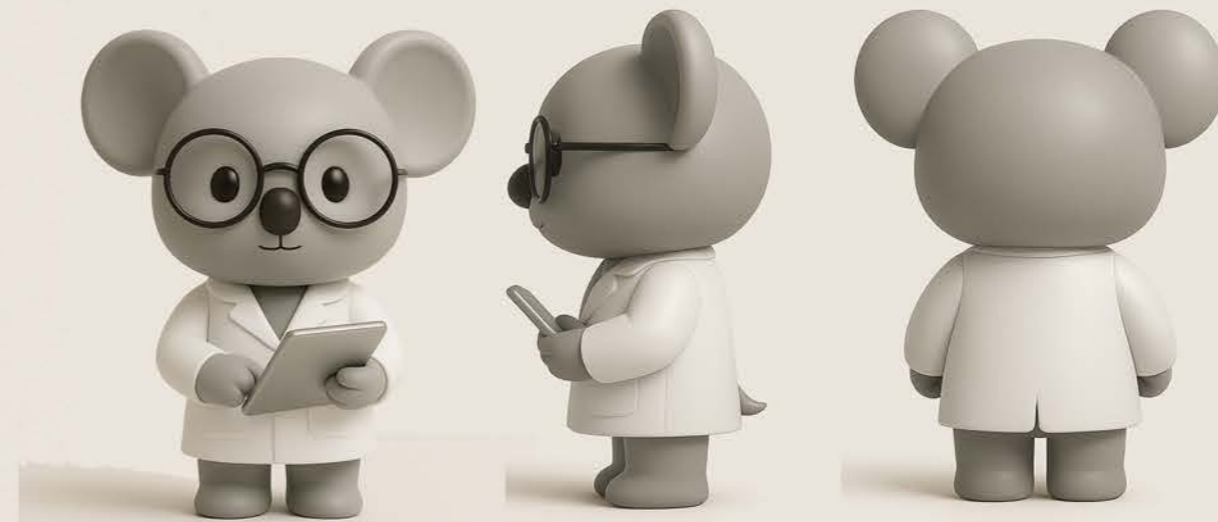


# Tora

*Role: Memory Manager*

*Personality: Quiet, obsessive, detailed*

*Function: Collects emotional data, tags memory bubbles, and builds shared virtual memories. He archives your feelings, one bubble at a time.*



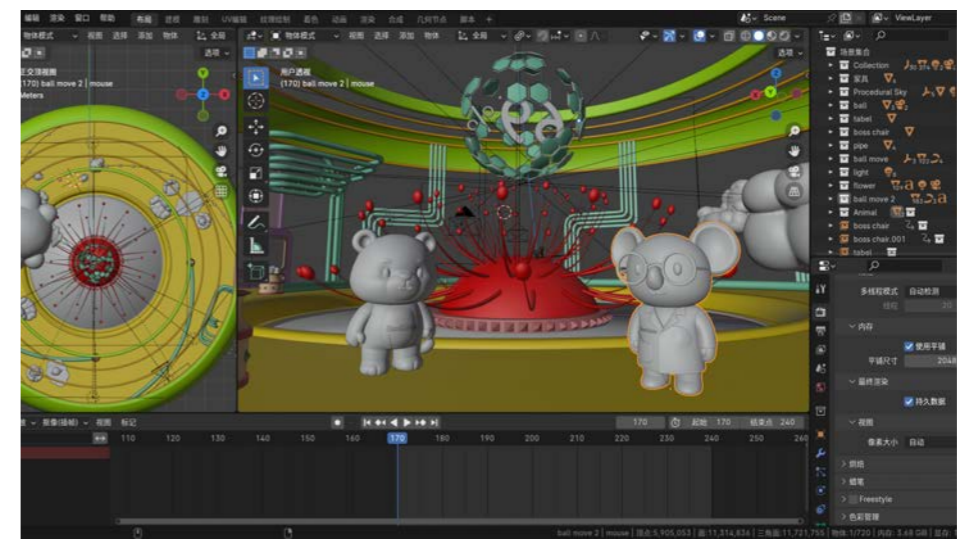
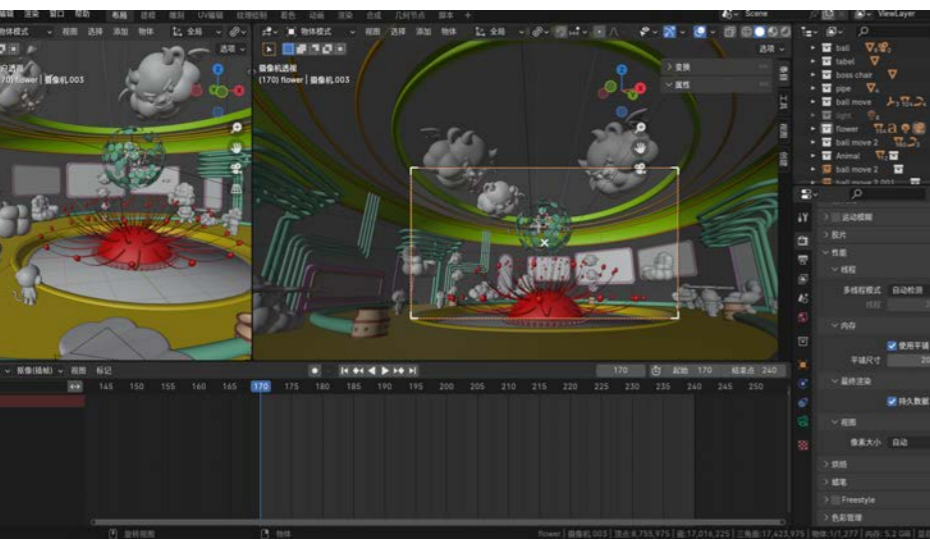
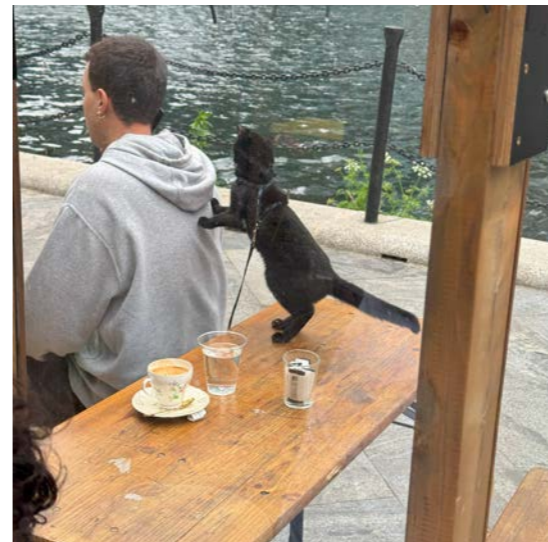
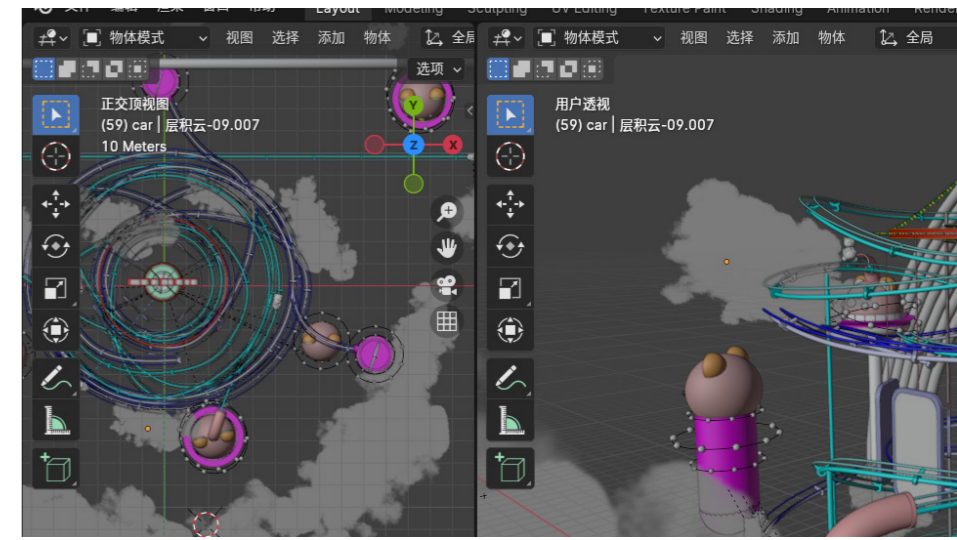
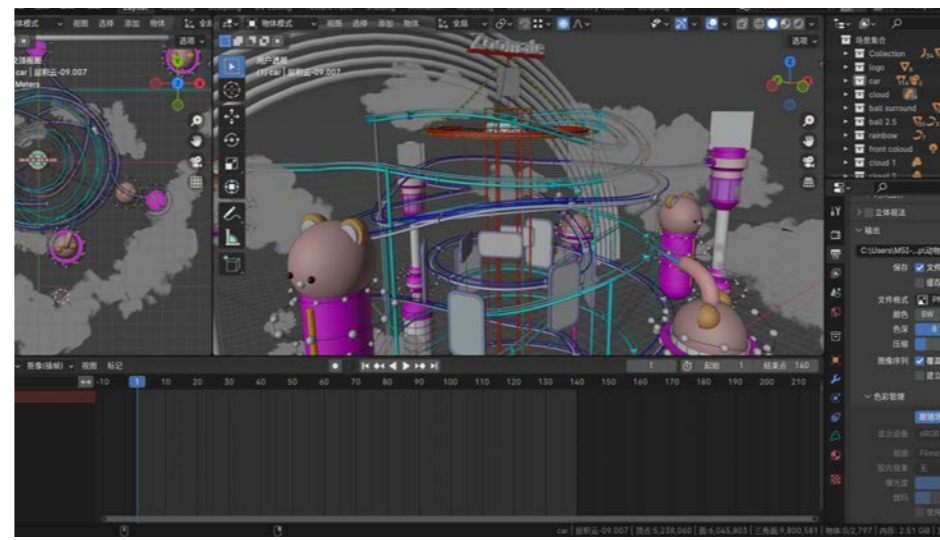
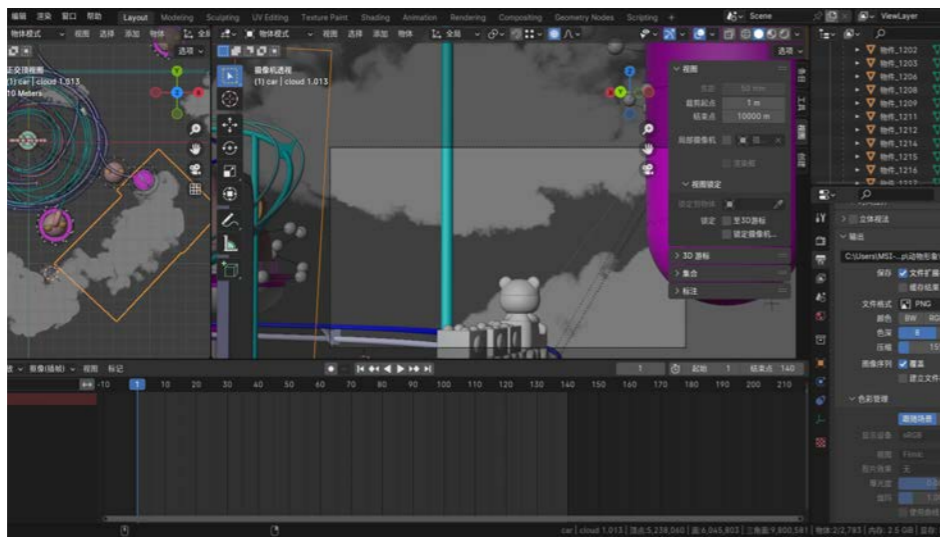
# Koa

*Role: Emotional Environment Designer*

*Personality: Slow, gentle, relaxed yet precise*

*Function: Controls room lighting, weather, and music in the Zoomate world to guide mood transitions. Your emotions shape the world he paints.*





## Reflections on Filming: Embodying a Speculative System through Cinema

Transitioning from interface and spatial design into filmmaking was not a seamless shift—it was an emotional and intellectual rupture. In the Zoomate film, I was no longer just visualizing systems; I had to embody them through movement, lighting, framing, and rhythm. The protagonist—a lonely gay designer entangled with an AI-generated partner—became a vessel through which I could project my own questions about control, love, and technological dependence. Every shot required me to translate abstract systems into emotional tension: how does a gesture show data manipulation? How does a room feel when its mood is curated by code? The cinematic process became a method of making speculation emotionally real.

One of the most difficult parts of the shoot was managing the contradiction at the heart of the Zoomate universe: it is both seductive and disturbing. The world I had created—soft, dreamy, and cartoonish—had to remain visually appealing, yet subtly reveal its underlying violence. I constantly questioned myself: was I aesthetically sanitizing the systems I wanted to critique? Was the “cute” visual language—so effective in engaging queer users—also masking the algorithm’s extraction of emotional data? This tension became a guiding principle in my directing choices: using warm colors with sharp undertones, allowing silence to stretch slightly too long, framing interactions with both affection and unease. Filming made me reflect on how easily control can disguise itself as care—and how design often participates in that disguise.

Ultimately, filming Zoomate became more than a storytelling exercise. It became a form of critical embodiment—a way to inhabit, question, and reveal the systems I had been theorizing on paper. It taught me that speculative design must not only propose alternative futures, but must also feel their emotional temperature. And sometimes, the only way to access that temperature is to walk through it with a camera, frame by frame.

