

LDD Evaluative Report - Mia

by Mia Harries

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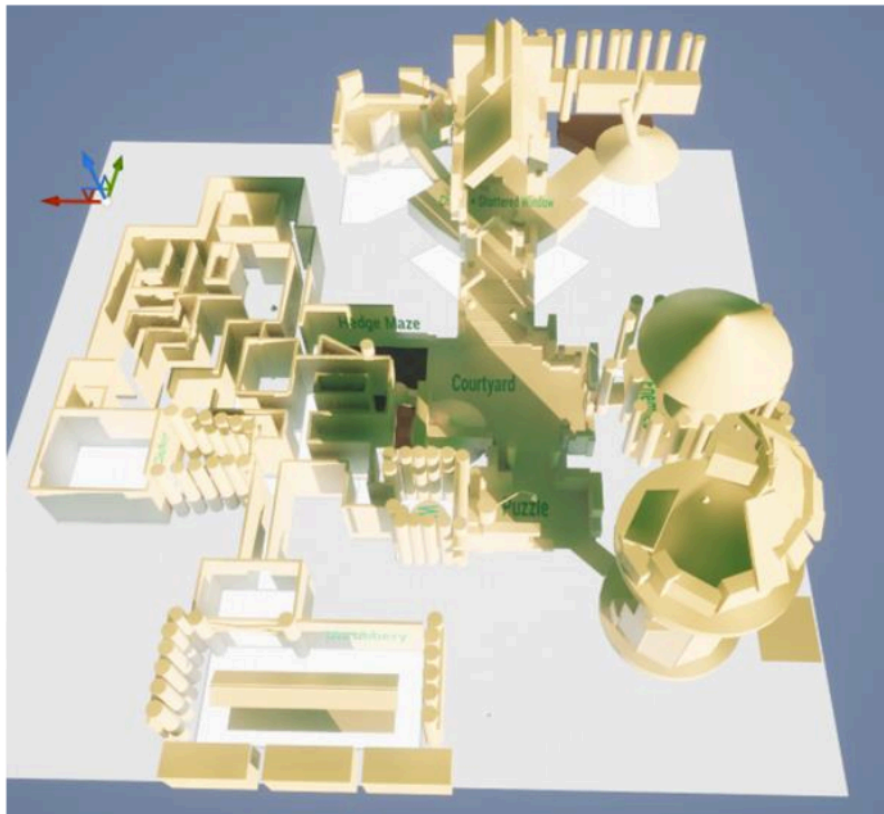
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Evaluative Report – Level Design Group Project

Mia Harries - 2304406

Contents:

The Game	3
<i>Game Summary</i>	3
<i>Target Demographic</i>	3
<i>Design Choices</i>	4
Research.....	5
<i>Self-Directed Learning</i>	5
<i>Role Research</i>	6
<i>Applied Game Theory Principles</i>	7
<i>Reflected Teamwork</i>	8
Bibliography	9

The Game

Game Summary

The name of our game is Sinbound, the general game idea is a Doom style first person shooter game with element of a dating sim, that takes place within the 9 circles of hell from Dante's Inferno [1]. In the game the player would travel from level to level, killing enemies, retrieving ammo, new weaponry and meeting new character, some of which would be romanceable. When deciding this game genre, we researched into similar styles of games such as the earlier Doom games [2] and Monster Prom [3] for the dating sim aspect. The reason behind the player's motivation for defeating each level is for the main character to collect enough of their soul from each boss on their respective levels, to eventually escape hell back to the world of the living.

Target Demographic

The desired target audience for the game, initially was in the late teens, specifically PEGI 16 [4]. Although, as we continued to develop the game as a group and especially when considering the themes of our levels, we soon realized that we had to change the age to PEGI 18 [4]. More specifically, when considering levels like lust, we wanted to include things such as nightclubs and sexual props within the level which meant that the age rating, we began with would not have been appropriate. The people we were hoping to cater to with this sort of game were people that enjoy some of the older style of fps, like Doom [2] or Halo [5] where the primary goal is to eliminate all enemies within your path. To give ourselves a unique selling point, this is where we included the idea of dating simulator elements when it comes to defeating bosses, the player can either fight or flirt their way out of the level.

Design Choices

To decide the theming choices of the game, the group collectively created a Miro board together, in it is a collection of the overall aesthetics of the game and the intended feeling and colour pallets of each level we would make. A linear level design was decided from the start due to the fast paces style of the game. The 2D art style followed similarly to forgive me father 2 [6], and then the 3D style, which was incorporated into the levels and textures was more the resident evil PS2 [7] style and the more pixelated Ultrakill [8] and Dusk [9] style. To achieve the design choices, when it came to my texturing specifically, I had to adjust the canvas size so that it could follow this slightly pixelated style while keeping in with the darker themes of the game.

For Sinbound, it was decided that we would use darker colours and fit each level within its own colour pallet, that would further be accentuated by the lighting we incorporated. For example, I created a block out level for limbo, one of the first levels in the game, I used inspirations of the garden of Eden, church ruins and forests, the reason is because limbo is where children go when they die as stated in Dante's Inferno [1]. Because of this I made sure to stick with green and pale off white colours even when making the block out and when planning the texture colours for the necessary assets. From the beginning I made sure to include green lighting because I wanted emphasis on the greenery and life within limbo despite it being in hell of all places, it's meant to represent being the holiest and most peaceful of the 9 levels, which is the case since it is one of the tutorial levels.

The same can be said about the train station, although I was not the one to block it out, when texturing the assets for it, I had to make sure to stay within the chosen style whilst keeping up this gloomy atmosphere it had to exaggerate. I did this by including more neutral colours, and using a lower opacity black on multiply to shade.

Research

Self-Directed Learning

Throughout my time modeling and texturing for this group project, I spent a lot of it teaching myself new techniques and learning new settings within software like MAYA [10], Photo shop [11] and Procreate [12]. Although I have learnt a lot about these applications over my time at university, it was important that I taught myself new tools outside of class to help further my learning in my own time. One of my main forms of learning was of course through trial and error by using the software myself. For example, trying out new settings in MAYA [10], adding a banner to the tree I had modeled by making it looked draped over with the use of nCloth. Trial and error were objectively the most effective way for me to learn since it allows me to learn as I go and helps me to remember if I need to repeat it because I can learn from my mistakes.

For moments when I would want to learn something myself but was unable to figure it out in the software, I would either result to watching a YouTube [13] tutorial or look for articles online on the topic I was looking for. Photoshop is not a program I am used to, and although I know how to do some parts, overall I struggle to use it, to overcome this I watched few videos on how to adjust my canvas size [14] which was imperative for the textures I created, a video to help boost my understanding of layers in photoshop and overall organization [15], and looking into how to sharpen blurry images [16] so that my textures could correctly lineup with the UV. Though sometimes if I was impatient and preferred an answer rather than learn step by step, it resulted in articles, usually the ones made by adobe for a more direct answer to my struggle. There are two main articles I followed whilst making my textures, one on the use of colour balance for cohesiveness [17] and the other on how to import my own brushes into photoshop [18] which I primarily used to import texture brushes for rust on metal or dirt on wood.

Overall, I believe that my self directed learning was useful in helping me develop my modelling and texturing skill at my own pace, allowing me to make mistakes which help me to understand and learn more effectively. Furthermore, my skills that I have been able to develop through articles and videos is clearly shown in my work, especially when it comes to my textures, because of how organized I've been able to keep them, and the wide variety of textures I've been able to produce with imported brushes for our group project.

Role Research

Throughout this project my primary role was texturing, I would take uv's from the assets in the shared drives, uploaded by group members and then texture them in, at first substance painter [19], and then primarily afterwards in Photoshop [11] and Procreate [12]. Before texturing I helped with a little bit of everything, I worked on the block out for limbo level 1 myself, a couple pieces of concept art for some of the assets, and I also created a few models myself to be included. These were just some small bits and pieces i did before texturing assets, which was what i did most of during the project. I was not the strongest at texturing but since it was necessary for the project I took on that role, and that was accompanied by some research I had to do into it.

Although I already know how to texture, over the course of learning in classes, I had to investigate more in depth guides on texturing, to really understand not only my role but how I can improve from where I was at the time. I investigated advanced techniques in textures [20] for general understanding and not just uvs. Looked at a blog on how professional texture artists make handmade textures using uvs [21], and how I can add 'wear and tear' to my textures without it looking unrealistic [22].

I knew what my role was from the beginning, but to help my understanding, I researched into the definition of the role so that I could understand my responsibilities as the texture artist of the group. [23] [24] Overall I believe that after looking at the definition of the role, what I have achieved over the course of the project, making handmade textures for the assets that fit within our game levels, I can confidently say that I have fit into the role effectively and done my job admirably for the group. Though of course there are always areas in which I can improve in the role, to do with cohesiveness of textures on multiple assets in the level as a whole and not just within one individual model.

Through understanding my role at its base responsibilities and then researching in depth on how to grow from my current skills, I believe I have been able to achieve successful and visually appealing textures for my group. They fit into their respective levels, the colours work cohesively even without the overlay lighting, and the overall mood they bring to the scene is effective to the viewer. This also applied when I was creating character art, they successfully fit into the level in a way that appeared cohesive and in a way that would fit in with the levels, since I was also the character, weapon and enemy concept artist. Which meant it was important that everything I created fit in with the style we as a group were set on from the beginning.

Overall, I had a variety of responsibilities and roles during our time as a group, but my focus and research during level design was towards creating textures and block out

layout that fit within the style of our game which, with the help of my research, I believe I did this effectively.

Applied Game Theory Principles

When creating the level block outs it was important that we consider some game design theory principles [25] and some ludological concepts [26]. Such as, setting clear objectives for the player, in Limbo the idea was to have the level be linear and then an NPC would give them a quest and send them toward a new unlocked part of the map, which would then circle back to the NPC they spoke to, making their direction and objective clear from the beginning. The same can be said for the overall story since each level must be completed in order, making it linear and clear to go through. Another principle I followed was planning on how to balance the gameplay with equal risk and reward. In my block out, I used cones to represent enemies to show the modelers where they will be, which helped me to determine the balance needed. For example, there are 3 enemies shown in the tower, as such, when they reach the top, they will be rewarded with ammo and health, equal to the required ammo they would have needed to kill the enemies plus some more. This enables the player to want to fight these enemies because it was worth the risk of losing health. Ludologically speaking the playability of the game should be clear without having to narrate to the player directly, for example my level is meant to feel as a sort of tutorial, but that is addressed in a playable way where the player must interact and move around to learn the different gameplay mechanics without text or someone telling you directly what to do. I set up a variety of small interactable sections to my limbo level such as a pool that heals the player, a rope to cut to retrieve ammo, a puzzle of sorts and simple things such as broken stairs, to show them they can jump to get to usually unreachable places. This I believe was a good use of ludological concepts within my level design.

Reflected Teamwork

During the project, I believe my research into my role, game design concepts and overall adaptability and skill learning was very effective. I researched by using online forums, videos and sometimes by simply trying out new tools within the application. When reflecting on this, I truly believe these were all useful ways for me to learn. My skills have grown throughout this project and despite struggling at times I know in the future that I can research for guidance and growth.

When considering teamwork that was necessary for the project, there are a few things that we did to maintain balanced communication despite sometimes falling behind. When working as part of a team I made a discord server for us to all communicate when necessary and even have meetings within it. We created a shared Dropbox to effectively share the most recent unreal files with one another and also be able to show and transfer models and uv maps. Because of this it made texturing the assets much easier for myself because I could just open the Dropbox and immediately download any required files or models needed. In this sense communication was effective, but on the other hand, at times it was difficult to get updates on one another due to everyone's different schedules when we were not in classes.

Overall, this project went well, my use of research helped to benefit, improve and complement my skills, as is evidenced in the final models, improved stylized textures and art that I had created for it. To improve in the future, I would consider looking deeper into stylized texture art so that I could be more readily prepared to create such textures in the future.

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

70/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Thanks for the submission Mia. Overall a very good piece of work with frank, honest reflection of your own practice throughout. The document is formatted well with the use of imagery and extensive referencing throughout, all using the IEEE format. Well done.

Research breakdowns are presented well and give good insight into personal work flow. Well done.

 A voice comment was left for this paper.

PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7

PAGE 8

PAGE 9

PAGE 10