

Ewan Henderson

1901997

BA Computer Games Design

M4X01560

Tasks in the order I have received them:

Task One: Semiotic Analysis (Ryan's Task) = 446 Words

Task Two: Manifesto (Julia's Task) = 475 Words

Task Three: Reflexive Writing (Jon's Task) = 412 Words

Task One: Semiotic Analysis (Ryan's Task)



‘Risryn’ by Michel Donze

The picture is a digital illustration of concept art from the *Absolver* Video Game by Michel Donze. The piece depicts a masked woman in slightly armoured clothing who is armed with a sword on a cliff, looking off to the left of the image. This image is called *Risryn*

Johannes Itten heavily explores the theory of colour Impression in his book *The Elements of Color* which helps us understand and analyse the emotive responses we have to certain colours, and more specifically how they react with certain surrounding colours, tones, and combinations. In *Risryn* we see a liberal use of red in the image as a primary colour of the character as well as an accent in the background. Exploring the character design we are lead to believe that the character is a warrior. “It [Red] was worn as a sign of material occupation by warriors in combat.” (Itten, 1997, p.86) This is also eluded to by the armour and armaments donned by the character, which will be explored later in this analysis.

Itten also mentions how contrast effects the impression of a colour, especially if it's a harsh contrast with a bright colour on dark background. In this situation we look at the effect of red on a contrasting background of the characters under layer of clothing. “Proper contrasting turns red-orange into an expression of feverish, belligerent passion.” (Itten, 1997, p.85-86) this shows that the character is most likely a confident, outgoing person who is driven with a cause.

It's possible that many things in the image are restricted to only having "*Synthetic Function*" (Phelan and Rabinowitz, 2012, p. 86) that is explored in Narrative Theory as this image is partially design as well as art, being concept for video game. This could apply to her sword and armour simply serving a purpose of function in combat, or reinforcing for her position as a warrior in the narrative of the image. This is reinforced by James Phelan, emphasising the "danger of abstraction." (Phelan and Rabinowitz, 2012, p. 84) and how in narrative, some things may just be plot items to provide function in the story.

The mask is an important part of this image, "The mask does not hide, but constitutes, the person." (Lawler, 2014, p. 129) and as suggested in *Identity: sociological perspectives* the mask makes up a part of the identity of a person and not simple a way to mask it. In this image I believe the mask acts as a representation of the character's role within their identity, that being an *Absolver* is such an important duty that it is a principal part of the identity shown to the world, possibly suggesting that they have given everything to their cause, it being the only thing in their life to focus upon.

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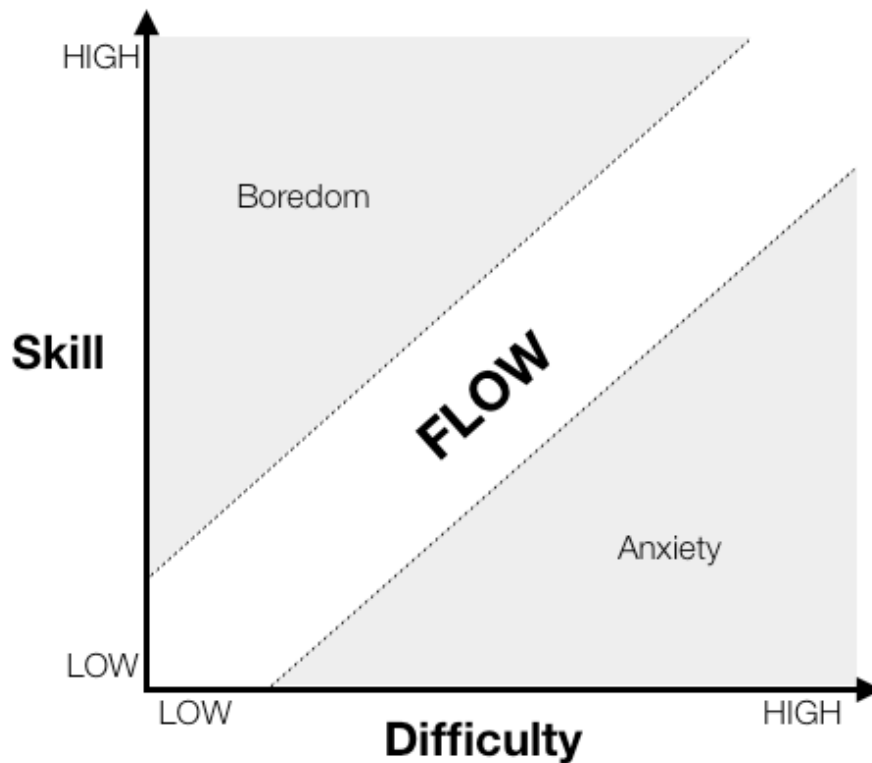
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Task Two: Manifesto (Julia's Task)

1. Escape Reality Through Unconventional Means
2. Explore details of a world to the n^{th} degree
3. Become an expert in everything, a jack of all trades
4. Embrace story, reject hollow narrative
5. Create an emotional response
6. Make out of passion, not labour
7. Teach the player something they do not know
8. Take inspiration from everything, everywhere

Escape Reality



Graph displaying Skill against Difficulty for the ideal cognitive flow

To escape reality one must be immersed, and video games allow a “connection to the artwork that is unthinkable in other media.” (Harvey and Samyn, 2018, p. 95). The interactive form of video games allow the player to completely distract themselves from the ‘outside world’, especially when a game is designed in such a way. “Cognitive Flow.” (Baron, 2012, p.1) Is a state evaluated by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi where the player is so engaged with the game at an optimal balance in between difficulty and player skill that they enter ‘flow’ and lose most perception of everything but the game.

Within games a way to simplify the process to have the player achieve cognitive flow is to remove “extraneous information that inhibits concentration.”(Baron, (2012), p.3) such as HUD or UI and focus on creating a world and narrative that persuades the player into situations to create cognitive flow.

Explore Details

When creating a world we can populate it with thousands of things but if these things are unexplored, shallow, the player will feel a disconnect and the system in place will feel unsatisfying. With magic systems the world can be made deeper by extrapolating, interconnecting, and streamlining the magic into the world.(Sanderson, 2013) This ideal can be applied to many things within a world, and subconsciously will make things seem more ‘right’ to a player as everything flows a bit more naturally between the player and the world. Unless the narrative decides that the player is the only person with ‘magic’ it is expected that there is a disconnect, and most likely part of the narrative.

However, if the disconnect between player and world is unintentional it results in a feeling of undeveloped world, making the game “strain plausibility.”(Sanderson, 2013) Having the knowledge to support the effects of a single magic in a world is important, such as it may effect “society, culture, ecology, economics, and everyday lives.”(Sanderson, 2013) and with a single piece of magic may create new aspects for a world without having to add more... stuff.

Embrace Story

Story provides a vessel for worldbuilding details and immersion, but primarily to “inspire and motivate players.”(Sailer, 2017) and immersing the player into a game world with a strong narrative generates a certain amount of “social relatedness”(Sailer, 2017) that drives the player to achieve as a character in the game. Having a strong story also creates an “Ethical dimension.”(Adams and Rollings, 2007, p. 120) where the player aligns with the morals of the game world, allowing a sense of freedom if the morals are different from theirs, another factor of using story to escape reality.

Without conflict a game will be boring, and to generate conflict there needs to be rules set by the narrative, being equivalent to breathing life into a world that without narrative would simply be a diorama of an empty, pretty, dead, space.

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Task Three: Reflexive Writing (Jon's Task)

A reflection on one of the final cutscenes in Absolver.



The moment a mask is removed in the cutscene

“The player ceased to worry about death.”(Rogers, 2010, p.278) in games where there is a lack of real consequence for character death, the player feels a certain amount of security, we are immune to the fear of failure and start having a trial and error style approach to problems. For context the players resurrections are linked to their mask, no mask means no resurrections; And we have never seen a mask removed before in the game or it's consequences. So when we witness the source of a characters immortality so brazenly removed in front of us and killed, we begin to feel fear again.

Suddenly I felt that the usual punishment for death was about to change, previously my only fear had been “setback punishment.”(Juul, 2009) where the only thing lost was time, but now had the game changed? I felt more anxious than usual, my previous bravado gone as anxiety riddled through my mind, ‘how bad will this be’. In reality I didn't have much more to fear, as Scott Rogers states, “You want them to keep playing.”(Rogers, 2010, p.279) so I soon realise what this situation is doing, it is generating challenge and conflict. As stated previously without the proper balance of game difficulty and skill things get boring, so to alleviate that I'm given the illusion of an overwhelming battle. This sudden need to survive and succeed acts as a motivator to continue playing; To discover that we're more capable than we knew.(Chavez, 2015) This linear style of conflict made me feel more accomplished as a player, allowing me to feel like my skills have grown vastly in a far shorter span of time.



The end of the cutscene

As the player the end of the cutscene we are challenged by the enemy, giving us almost a moment of respect as we're being treated as an equal fighter. This moment gave me hope in the sense of there being a possibility to defeat this never seen before phenomenon of death.

Supporting Scott Rogers words on continuing to play the game, the cutscene left with a feverish need to win, the game managing to elicit such a primal thing such as panic but with the disconnection of it being a video game. In a sense this maximised my efficiency as the panic and fear of failure was all too present yet the actual threat to my physical person was absent.

Bibilography

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