

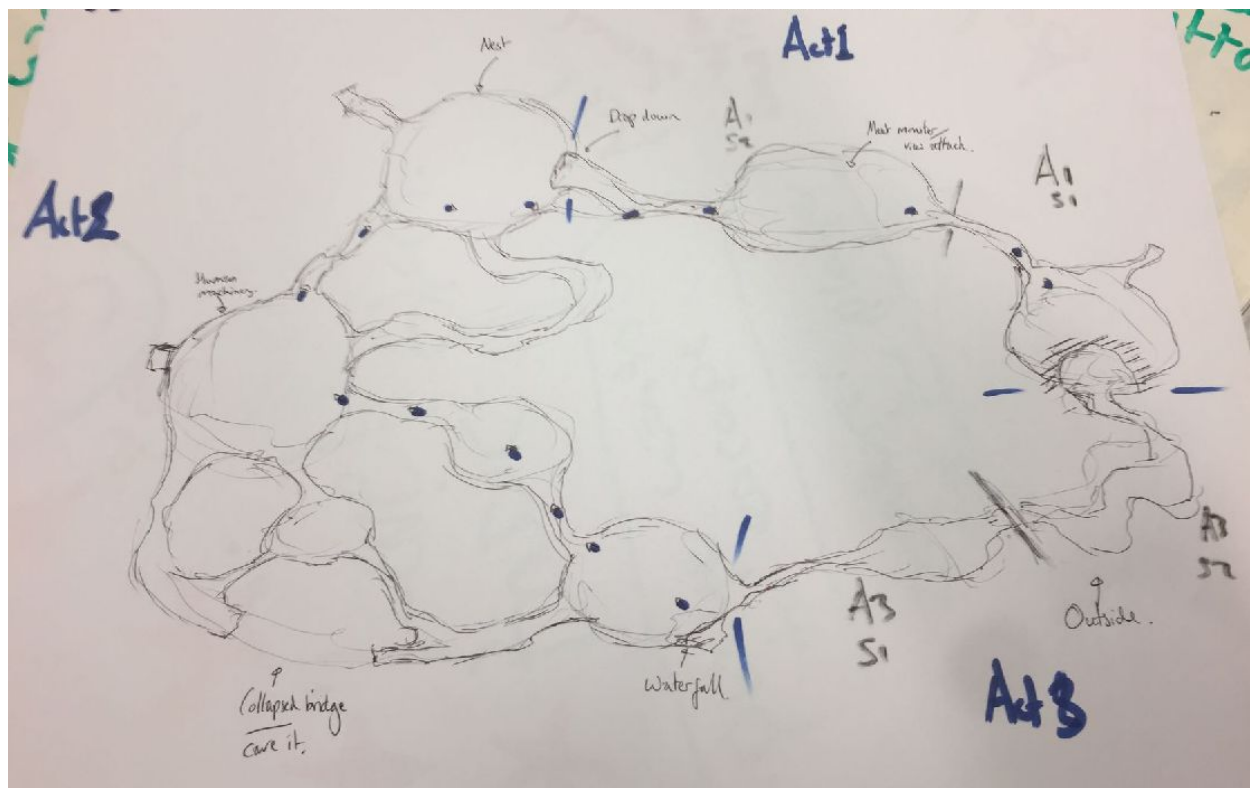
Creative Practice 3
Self Reflective Report
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At the beginning of this project, we were given the genre of "Survival horror" and the task to develop individual game pitches. As a team, we would then later decide upon which specific project we as a team would move forward with. Our initial pitches were prepared over the first week, however, due to a lack of consensus, we spent the following two weeks developing the pitches further, including a GDD, conceptual images and storyboards relating to the proposed project. My pitch focused on the fear of isolation and running out of resources, my proposed idea attempting to take that to the extreme with the player having to survive on a broken-down spaceship with dwindling resources and no nearby sources of rescue. I developed this idea after a conversation with one of my peers about modern fears, to which they jokingly suggested "The fear of your phone battery running out." After some thought, I realised that a phone running out of battery represented the fear of being unable to communicate or send for help and that underlying fear was a very powerful basis to build a game around.

The benefit of individually preparing pitches for the group is that it allowed quieter or less confident members of the group to showcase their ideas without being overshadowed. This also provided a good indication of the strength of an idea such as how well it had been considered. However, I do feel that among the cohort that there was a lack of clarity as to what was needed to be developed for the pitch and when the pitch needed to be developed by. On reflection, I do believe the group may have been given too much time to work on these pitches as while the additional time allowed the ideas to be refined a little further I do feel it took away from time working on the final game idea itself.

As a group, we decided to move forward with Fen and Ellie's pitch "Submerged." This idea focused on the fear of the unknown and of being trapped with no escape. I chose to vote in favour of this project due to how well thought out the project seemed. Together we then planned exactly how the game would be structured. Initially, the discussion was slow to start and required tutor support to push the discussion down a useful path. Reasons for this include the initial proposer of the idea being unavailable at the time causing the remainder of the group to be unsure as to how we best developed the idea further. There was also a lack of familiarity with working together as a team and with level design in general that lead to individuals being hesitant to speak up.

As the discussion gained traction we were then able to develop a level plan through drawing visualisations of the level and the regions within its structure. As the pitch suggested, the level design would loop around on itself, but the regions and placement of elements such as cutscenes were discussed and placed on the map.

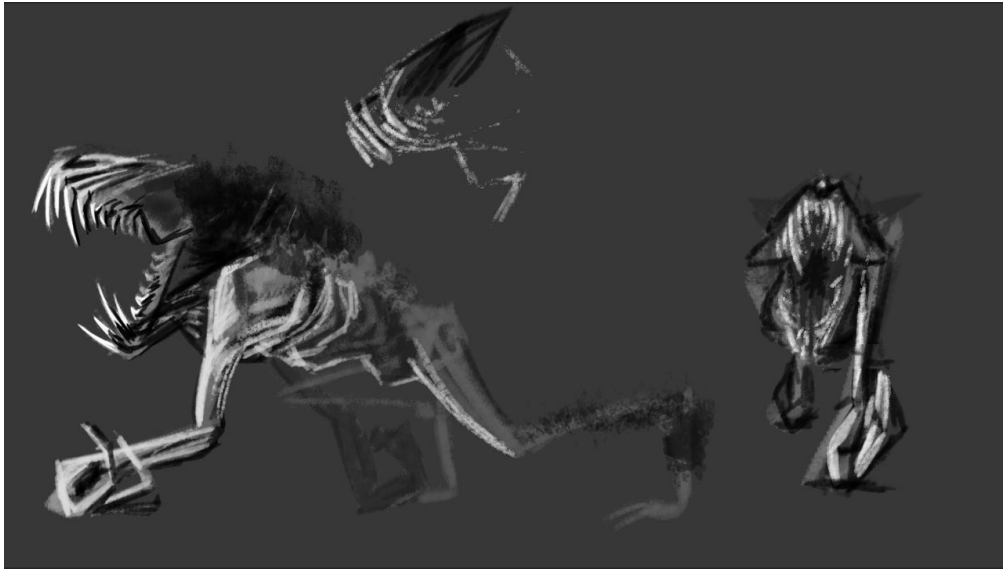


(Figure 1: Level map)

The benefit of planning the level structure as a team was that it allowed those team members who had not yet contributed to this idea to become invested and enthusiastic about the game. This planning also allowed greater clarity over what the group would be creating in settings, assets and animations.

Early on within the project the team self-allocated roles based on both what we as individuals were skilled at producing, as well as the skills we wanted to develop further. One downside of allocating roles in this way was the group was initially to bias in favour of Art and Asset Creation. Once the issue of a lack of Developers was raised, however, several members of the group quickly redistributed themselves to fill the roles needed within the team. This I feel was a strength of our team members as it prevented us wasting time debating our roles which could have been spent focused on the project itself.

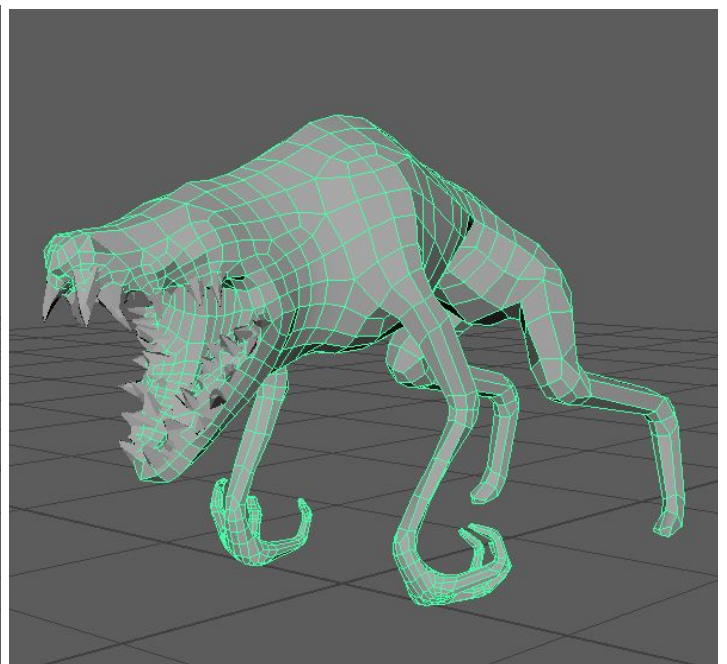
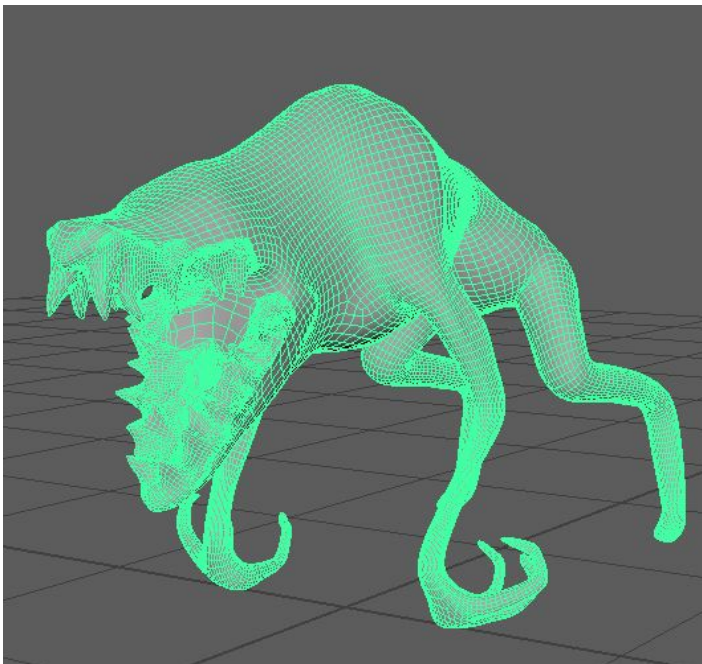
My role within the team was primarily 2D concepting, however, I did work on some 3D character design near the end of the term. Within 2D my work focused on environmental design and the design of the monster within the game. Within my work I was somewhat experimental; trying different mediums, creating new photoshop brushes and attempting to develop new skills, like photobashing. I do not feel I was very successful utilizing techniques such as photobashing in this project, however, my experimental pieces using watercolour, and the digital painting methods I felt comfortable with worked well.



(Figure 2: Monster Digital Drawing)

Throughout much of my work within this area of the project, I did not feel as if I was truly contributing well to the team. Some of this was due to being unclear as to what types of images I needed to produce, causing some of my work to look generic and unfocused. Another key reason was due to how I didn't feel my work was directly contributing to the development of the game itself. This may have been improved with more tutor support such as critique and tutorials related to developing my design and artistic skills. Focusing more on 3D asset creation may also have guided me away from a sense of purposeless.

The 3D work created for this project focused on the design of the monster within the game. This design was first developed in 2D, with some iteration used after feedback with group members. The Monster itself was initially blocked out in Zbrush but later retopologized in Maya to provide a good base mesh for later detailing, skinning and animation. While I had previously worked in Zbrush with similar modelling, retopologizing the mesh in Maya was a new skill. A downside of this was it took far longer to retopologize the model than I had anticipated even with coming in outside of expected hours to work on it. Despite this, I am very happy with the quality of the retopologized mesh as I feel as if I used it skillfully, despite my inexperience.



(Figure 3 & 4: Before and after retopologizing the model)

Now knowing how long this method took to do, any future models I make will likely be planned to begin much earlier to account for this time or a different method of modelling would be used from the beginning. Despite

this setback, I was far more motivated to work on this model than the previous 2D pieces. This is because it felt like a much more useful use of my time as something that would be incorporated directly into the game. I also felt as if I had more tutor support for this aspect of learning, which likely encouraged me further.

Within the team itself, there was some informal communication between individuals, but the group mostly worked independently in their areas of the project. The downside of this was there wasn't an extremely clear plan to work towards. Because of this. There were several times within the project that I felt unsure of what I needed to do or felt that I wasn't usefully contributing to the team. Ways of improving this situation could include having a designated project manager or a clear list or timeline of tasks and deadlines. However, regular team meetings could also aid in ensuring everyone has a good idea of what they are doing, what others are doing and how the group can best move forward.

The lack of clear smaller goals and deadlines has made it difficult to establish how well time was managed both within the team and as an individual. Regardless, I do feel that for the majority of the project I did spend my time well. There were periods within the project where my productivity could have been improved. This was due to how I was hindered by a general sense of uncertainty. To improve my time management in future, I will try implementing a clear plan of action early within the project so I know exactly what I need to do to ensure my time is managed well within the time given.

To conclude, I do believe the team worked well as a cohort although communication could have been improved to some extent. All members to my knowledge contributed to the project in some way and there was some discussion within the project over the work we were doing. The overarching issue I faced as an individual was a lack of clear planning. This led to a feeling of uncertainty and made me question the usefulness of the work I was producing. Both my motivation and productivity suffered because of this, so in the future, I endeavour to ensure I create or have access to a clear plan showcasing the work I need to contribute.