

Halloween Horde Shooter, Self-Reflective Evaluation

Name- Thomas Woodvine

Module- Creative Practise 1

Introduction

To create a Third person based shooter, utilising the theme- 'Halloween', and building off a 'Horde-styled Shooter' game mode. Research would be conducted to establish aesthetics in game, to create an appropriate style for the Halloween theme. Techniques (such as game form and functionality) would need to be implemented to create the foundations of the game.

Development of the techniques would associate the starting aims with the structure of the game, and create a starting point for establishing the functions of the game.

Research Evaluation

For the grounds of the research, I used personal experience of media (films & games) to find source material appropriate for reference within the setout theme (Halloween). By associating the 'medieval village style' in my research, I went on to discover real (European) architecture with gothic style, and was useful to use as more accurate research material (when it came to style of- compact, buildings kept in close proximity).

Games Design Theory

To find the correct layout for the level, I compared principles of level design, to find the best setup for the map. A hub and spoke style map could have worked for a 'horde shooter', however, as I wanted to keep the map fairly compact, I found the 'hub and spoke style' would most likely look unnatural (too many diverging paths in a small location).

The optimum choice for a compact map would be a ring layout, to prevent dead ends and keep a flow for the player's movement. The ring layout would also provide the player with the choice of strategy (e.g. to allow the enemy to give chase, go behind the enemy, and to possibly escape enemy chase) and tactics.

Technical Research

Using research of how to create an AI (to follow player), I was able to judge the enemy's movement and how easily the enemy could maneuver across the map (if imperfections in the map prohibited the movement path/speed of AI).

I also stored research for possibilities (blueprints) of mechanics which could be appropriate for the game style, these could be implemented to create more engaging and fluid gameplay experiences.

Contextual Research

Using personal experience for this, I found that atmosphere for the game's focus 'Halloween' could draw from horror film classics (such as Psycho house, found in diary research), in which the 'horror' elements are often blatant (visually scary) and kept visuals simplistic for emphasis. The film 'Nightmare Before Christmas' stood out, as the animation style fell in with simplicity and effectiveness (e.g. colour schemes kept consistent, set design kept clean/not overly complex, and maintained style of objects).

Game Research

To harness an idea for a medieval style, the style of Skyrim would be a clear source of inspiration for the game's style (architecture and atmosphere). To understand a HUD setup for the game, use past game experience to understand what information would be required for this style of shooter game, and how to adapt an idea for the HUD (suitable for the ingame events).

Research Conclusion

Researching source material, has helped find the appropriate aesthetics and discover functional possibilities within the game. The research material creates a base for the games style, and where to focus the techniques upon.

Technique Evaluation

To assess the map layout, I used the 'third person preset' to play test the map. To further my test of the map, a 'follow player AI' was constructed through technique research. On top of the 'follow AI', a basic 'player health bar system' was created, along with a blueprint created for the 'follow AI' to damage the player.

Identification & Suitability of Production Methods

Construction of gameplay was suitably done within Unreal Engine. Allow for map construction and technique development.

Development of Techniques & Skills

Creating the map layout, I was able to plot specific areas (event areas, e.g. pickups, points of interest, spawns) and plan how the gameplay would function around the map. Appropriately styled assets were manipulated to create the desired map structure and style.

Overall Technique of Work Produced

The final map layout (Fig.1) is well structured, as it applies suitably to principles of level design (researched as; ring layout, atmosphere, gameplay, etc.). However, there are minor elements to the map which affect the overall product (Marker for one pickup is yet to be placed on the map, and Yellow area B is an exploitable section of the map).

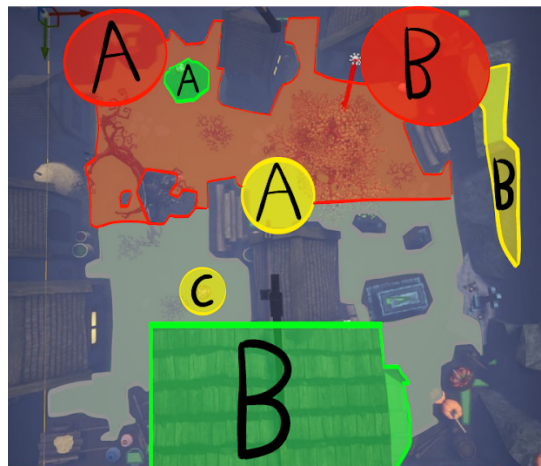


Figure 1- Final Map Layout

Technique Conclusion

The techniques utilised have led to the completion of a successful game, base map, which coincides with the themes and research set at the beginning. With the exception of an error of creating opportunity for exploitive gameplay, however, this can be resolved by revisiting level design and altering that aspect.

Development Evaluation

In order to create a rudimental playtest (specifically for movement capability), the AI was implemented with its addition of being able to damage the player, and therefore the test could proceed. When testing AI movement, there were platform patches which were restricted for the AI, this was easily corrected by altering assets (e.g. platform sizes, placements changed, as to allow access for the field mesh).

Creativity

To enforce risk/reward playability, pickups were planned to be purposely close to the enemy spawn points, therefore creating playable strategy within the game (player has the choice to attack or defend). To make a more immersive level style (emphasising game's researched style/theme), smaller assets were added to give a sense of detail (e.g. wagon loaded with goods, gives a slight sense of story within the map).

Relevance to Brief

The core game remained to it's set aim (third person, shooter), plan to implement risk/reward was mid development. The research set at beginning set the overarching style, and was not altered through level design.

Iterative Design Practise

After the final iteration, the sole flaw discovered was due to one choice in level design. This choice was to use a raised ledge for the player to get highground over the enemy, however, as the enemies can't reach this position (and the player can) and damage the player, this position must also become inaccessible to the player.

Development Conclusion

Through development I was able to discover how to refine certain aspects of the game. The aspects being; level design flaw, emphasis on theme (via asset use), and how strategy (for the player) can be implemented in the game layout.