Project Post-mortem

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Introduction

Our project for this semester was to design and create three block-out levels for a racing game with basic fully functioning mechanics for the vehicles. The name of our racing game is Neo Drive, the main inspiration for the name is based off Neo Tokyo, with one of the levels being set there.

There are three levels and I was one of the main concept artists for it, the level was the Industrial level, set in an area away from the Neo Tokyo city, it was my role to visually create assets and landscapes for the level, so that the level designer may see what he envisioned and chose to improve, this would also help the modeller know what he has to model and with any issues he may come across.

Research Evaluation

My initial research was based off the ideas formed by our level designer Jason Broome, where most of my research was looking online at Google Images for inspiration for a better visual idea to what he had planned for the level. The overall ideas for which he had planned didn't really change, other than the race track needing to be extended, due to it being rather short compared to other levels. Also because of this change some areas of the map that were initially designed had to be altered, because of this my research began to change and I ended up looking at images based on areas of the track for inspiration.

Technical Research

I mainly used documentation to note down my research and overall development of my individual work, there were no real times where I looked online at any forums nor technotes for guidance, however most of my learning was self-initiated as I had to go off on my own to gather the resources and references I would need to use for inspiration for my drawings/concept art.

Contextual Research

I didn't use many variants of sources when gathering research as most of it all was images and concept art for guidance, during this semester I did not research into a lot of depth and breadth into the overall design and investigate how the Industrial level would look like. However, the images I had looked at were of high quality and detail and they gave me the right amount of inspiration to how the level should be formed.

Game Research

I looked at images online, mainly typing in searches for steampunk, and images from the video game Bioshock Infinite appeared, the whole game itself is themed in a futuristic steampunk way and thought this game would be a good source for inspiration to our industrial themed level. I looked at how the machinery was designed as well as how the blimps were made, because our level designer wants there to be a blimp/airship in the sky for our level. I also looked at Total Recall for inspiration for title designs at the end of the semester.

Research Conclusion

I believe my research was very poor, and I know I could have done a lot more as of finding more suitable images and even other forms of research such as sound and possibly looking at films for

inspiration.
The improvements I would make for next time, I would do research that would broaden my variety of sources as then I would have more of an option towards the whole visual design towards the level.
I would also deepen my research, for example look a more video games with different styles and see how they have implemented their overall design into their type of game.

Technique Evaluation

I mostly did all my drawings on paper and scanned them into the computer when I had finished them, I found doing this with ease as I find myself more able to draw on paper better than I can on a drawing tablet, I wanted to make sure the work I outputted was the best of my ability.
However I did experiment with drawing on a drawing tablet, I mainly just traced my images which I scanned in before however I even found this difficult as the outcome of this, the drawings I had done were not an exact replica, however I needed to do this, so I may experiment with colouring in on Photoshop.
While doing this work I documented it all in my Production Diary to the best of my abilities at the time, I also made a Gantt chart to help map out my work into what weeks I should do it and complete it by.

Identification & Suitability of Production Methods

I believe during the production of the Industrial level I was using the right tools for the job; however, I believe I could have done more with the tools I used, mainly photoshop, as I don't know how to use all its capabilities. During my production I had traced images that were not my own and after I had drawn them out, I realised that it was plagiarism towards the people of the images, so I scrapped those drawings and did my own versions. This change of approach is better as I can say that al the drawings I did were and are my own.

Development of Techniques & Skills

To start during the production, I stuck to what I knew as I believed this was the safest option for producing good quality work, however as mentioned before, I delved into working on the program Photoshop and I experimented in drawing some images on there, I also experimented colouring using the software and found it harder than anticipated, I'm going to have to practice it more, if I want to make sure the quality of work is good.

Overall Quality of Work Produced

The overall quality of work that I produced, the drawings themselves I am happy with, I ended up drawing concept art for street lights, pipes, gears, the train yard including it's surrounding, also the Blimp and much more, as stated before all of these were drawn on paper, however where I believe the quality of my work dipped was when I was attempting to do work on the drawing tablet, even so I did produce and keep that work. What I can do improve on this is to keep practicing drawing on the tablet and get used to the feel of the pen and tablet as that is where I believe I am struggling at, also I can improve my skills with colour theory and use this practice on Photoshop, another program I must learn to perfect.

Technique Conclusion

With in terms to my skills drawing on paper, they are the same as they were before, however my skills using photoshop and a drawing tablet to do my drawings on have increased with skill, even though the work I have produced on them may not look like progress, it is a step forward for myself and I am eager to continue developing these skills.

Development Evaluation

Our development process as a group was for the level designer to come up with a design for our track so then I, the artist, would be able to visualise this for him and allow the modeller to start make our idea come to life as you could say. If there were any changes to the track or the design, we would inform each one of us, the three of us who were apart of this group. There were problems regarding the length of the race track, however as mentioned before, I had an issue with some of my drawings being classed as plagiarism, which was correct, so I scrapped them and drew my own versions of them. This set me back as well as the production of the team, however we were able to continue outputting the work that needed to be achieved.

Creativity

I believe I was creative in my own way, as for some of the drawings I had done for the layout and view of the track, I did numerous iterations and different techniques to portray this, some were drawn out using the full page, using proportions as well. Other drawings were split into quarters so that I could show many sections of the track side by side one another. This was a bit of a risk as I had to make sure with my drawings that people knew what they were looking at and were not mislead into thinking I drew something else or a section of the track was misplaced by another.

Contribution within a group (group projects)

As a group we made a group chat using the social media app Facebook Messenger and kept in contact through there while we could not see each other out of lecture time, we spoke a few times to one another addressing any issues or changes that we had thought of, and whether they were possible to do in the time frame we had left.

Working Alone (individual projects)

I rarely worked alone, however when I was doing my individual work, mainly doing the drawings on paper, I came up with my own ideas and designs for how the track should look like as well as some assets that would be used within the level itself, for example I designed a new look to the portal at the finish of our course.

Iterative Design Practice

One noticeable example of iteration within my work would be the style of drawing and the technique I use for doing my work, as stated before, I mainly draw on paper as I find it easier than a drawing tablet.

Time Management

I believe my time management was adequate for the work I had to do, however as our time scale became closer to the end, there were a few things which still needed to be done. I had made a Gantt chart to help with my time management, however due to my thinking of having plenty of time to do my work, I didn't realize how fast time went until, as mentioned the last few weeks. The time I had planned out was realistic in hindsight, it was the case doing the work.
In the end all the important deadlines were met in time; however, I know I could have executed the work in a more time productive manner.

Development Conclusion

I believe my development process throughout this semester was successful, the only issues that I came across were solely due to my own error and these mistakes I plan to not make again in future work/projects. My documentation of my development that I put in my Production Diary, I believe is to a good standard and would not change this the next time I do it, however looking over my documentation there was some key information that I forgot to mention, which was my research. So there is room for improvement as this error was probably caused by myself not updating the document during the time I did the research.

Next time I plan to follow my Gantt chart and use it as it should be used, as during this semester I was having problems managing my time and that set me back, and held people while they were waiting for my drawings.

Analysis

Critique of the work you have produced

I did no play testing myself, however through examining and watching the Unreal team test it, it appeared that they came through some problems, however none of them effected my individual work of visualising and designing the Industrial level.

Critique of your own practice (and action taken)

Reflecting on my own working practices, I believe they were adequate for the task however there is room for improvement, for example I need to form a better time management plan, basically I must follow the Gantt chart that I make during the start of the project as that was my big mistake not to during this semester.
Another thing I can improve on is my skills using the drawing tablet as well as Photoshop, as these two skills are necessary in todays line of work in video game design, the majority of game developers nowadays have people working on computers and using drawing tablets for making their games.
I believe one thing as a group that we can improve on is our communication skills as we did not communicate as much as the other groups did, and their production rate for their levels was much faster than ours in my opinion, however as a whole class we did implement a google drive document where we could upload our work and others would be able to see it and comment on it, whether there would need to be any improvements or not.