

Project Proposal: Fragmented Sensory Video Game

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Introduction

Our proposed project is a multiplayer video game installation that requires players to work together while being separated into three physical “stations.” Our work is driven by the idea that every medium is traditionally limited by the expectations of its users: a television show is meant for watching and listening to, an iPhone app is meant to be touched, and of course a video game is made to be seen, heard, and controlled by some physical means. These conditions are all similar in that each element is tied to one of the five senses – but if these “expected” attributes were to be fragmented, how would the end users cope with the changes? We plan to explore this “fragmentation of the senses” by distributing different sensory outputs of traditional video games to multiple users: one player will see the game, one player will hear the game, and one player will feel the game.

Description

Three wooden walls are attached to one another in a triangular fashion, each wall defining itself as an individual station. Three players enter the space, attending to one of the three stations, where each station features a unique interface element – a screen (the “seeing” player, who will see the video game unfold visually), headphones (the “hearing” player, who can hear approaching enemies and other sounds), and a touch pad (the “feeling” player, who is warned of hazards as the player character draws near through intensifying vibrations). The players must act together to ensure their character survives and escapes the dungeon by communicating to each other through their respective controllers.

We are currently trying to find a fun and practical balance between the three different types of control schemes for each player. A current version of the controls would allow the seeing player to maneuver the character through the virtual space with directional buttons, while the hearing and feeling player would offer “hot” or “cold” warnings to the seeing player with the press of a “hot” or “cold” button (which would help the seeing player from running into trouble). To develop the most effective control scheme for all players, we plan to create a small-scale prototype of the game that will allow us to experiment with different control possibilities and invite our peers to give us feedback.

Conclusion

Our system deconstructs what is expected of traditional video games by compartmentalizing essential modes of communication that are typically synchronized and unified (visuals, sound, and tactile feedback). In our efforts to challenge the user’s expectations of media, we believe that video games lend themselves to our experiment by naturally inviting user participation. In an ever-changing technological society, it is important to continuously challenge the limitations of the mediums we use regularly; our project demonstrates this in an engaging and challenging interactive experience.

Schedule

September 20 – September 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flesh out control scheme for each player • Advanced background research • Planning the budget • Revisit project description
September 27 – October 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some concept art (tiles, sprites) • Build a basic version of the game with the three outputs
October 4	Proof of Concept Due
October 5 – October 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement physics engine • Finishing most art and music/sound effects • Design motor circuit to react to the game • Build external controls (basic buttons) to work with the game
October 18	Project Prototype Due

Influences and Sources

- *The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures* (2004)
Experimented with multi-player interaction and multiple simultaneous screens (being in different rooms at the same time)



- *Closure* (Demo in 2010)
An independent game that experiments with limiting the vision of the player. The spaces where the player can't see are pitch black, and are treated as endless pits unless they are lit up.



- *Amnesia* (2010)
The player feels helpless throughout the game without any weapons to fight back against the forces that stalk him. Similarly, our game will maintain a degree of helplessness – something traditionally not explored in video games.

