

Manifesto: The Consideration of Video Games as an Artform, the Written Word, and the Relativity of Meaning

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Today I wanted to introduce a bit into the psyche of myself; the mind behind Solo Studio, as well as to discuss (and demonstrate) the foundations which constitute my mannerisms of artistic expression as a game developer. Perhaps more aptly; to provide insight into the rationale of myself as a creator, for they say you cannot separate art from the artist, as the art is itself an extension (and reflection) of the artist. Irrespective, and really absent of any ulterior motive, I present this now:

We begin in the beginning, whereas everything was both formless and void; this void shrouded in darkness (how free!). Then the creator said: “Let there be light” then there was light. Casting something into existence, for which wasn’t formerly there, must’ve seemed so initially unnatural. In video games (how primitive a term), it began with pixels; illuminated squares. These illuminated squares form in unison a grid for which the creator, the “developer”, can create images. This serves as the canvas for which the artist can cast their creations on.

The developer created images which reflected that of familiarity to himself in his own world. He could program the behavior for the coloration of these pixels, further, he could allow interaction with these pixels via live input handling. The advent of object-oriented programming really enabled the execution of an application to be imagined as a sequence of linear events. Of course I am discussing the induction of video games as we know them today, and although I’m attempting a more drawn-out, metaphoric tone, my intent is to scene-set for the real discussion of this essay. And for brevity’s sake, and in contradiction to the grandiose nature of my writing (and its apparent parallel to that of *The Inception*), just remember the developer nor the experiencer are particularly divine.

I wish to utilize video games as a more considerate artform, henceforth let’s call them “digital experiences”. And my purpose with this is to tell stories, convey themes, perhaps simply to express absurdism generally. My purpose (in its literality) is not relevant to the player. The relevance to the player is that for which is presented in front of them; simply to synthesize whatever is presented forth; henceforth the “experiencer”. Thus, the relationship is defined: the experiencer bears witness to that for which the developer presents, let’s call the developer the “creator”.

Historically, the most apt parallel is perhaps the play; works of theater. The emphasis of theatrics is most often its choreography, though I consider this the most similar as there’s traditionally been a role of the audience whilst watching live. And not

all plays are interactive, though even the response elicited influences acting participants. Nonetheless, this digital experience sits somewhere between theatrics and, additionally, cinema. With film, the emphasis is moreso the visual; the cinematography. Curated to be witnessed anywhere rather than the controlled environment of the theater, much more time is spent scrutinizing the color and transitional moments, a play with no intermission. And the convergence of these mediums bears the newfound utility of video games, now as digital experiences, which I hope to promote. To curate as the creator; to intertwine interactivity with the audiovisual presentation.

And in this entry, I want to delve into this audiovisual presentation; to dissect it. Each sense is a target; maybe in the programmatic context it can be considered a function for which many variables affect. Each sense has its own function, and the goal of any good creator is to present the experience in such a way that there exists a cogency between the inherent tone of the theme and the induced interpretation of the environment itself. And what will become apparent, as for the creator to influence these senses, is the burden the creator must undertake in truly understanding the disposition of the anticipated experiencer (perhaps you know it as meeting the audience?).

First, we begin with the visual scene: that for which you *see* (this sense's significance). Let's discuss symbolism through color: green has the common invocative feeling of calming due to its prevalence in nature. But imagine now a contrived upbringing in a fixed environment. Perhaps through the perspective of a seahorse; whereas you're instead to explore forests of saltwater coral, the most common color instead being a subdued terracotta. Imagining yourself in this circumstance, whilst maintaining the integrity of your human intelligence, what then would your visual manifestation of calm be?

And onto sound; where one cannot see, one relies on their ability to hear. And just as with color, the primary purpose is to navigate this environment; to avoid danger, to distinguish between safe and unsafe. Whilst one is unable to bear witness, visually, sound can alert as to the occurrence of an event. Furthermore, to communicate; where barriers of physical difference remain stigmatizing, our commonality is often our language: thus enabling like individuals to relate. Further along, it will be discussed in specifics the attributes and functions of language.

Though it is when the aforementioned senses are combined that culminates the effect, because in truth, it is all context-dependent. A child's laughter is much more soothing in the middle of a park at high noon, yet terrifying whilst say exploring a spillway tunnel in the middle of the night. As an example; silence is often utilized intentionally in horror games, actually any obscuring or absence of stimuli for these senses can be used consciously to procure some premeditated atmosphere.

With this; the general aesthetic; the cogency of the design choices delivered by the creator. Back to the horror genre: low-poly render filters are a staple. This is a consequence of two apparent points: first the uncanny valley (the literal effect of the design), next historical cogency (that of which relating to disposition), and the utmost goal in the artform of game design is to perpetuate the greatest degree of immersion. Read this essay on a beach, now at your work office, now during the next time you attend a funeral. You of course will not reasonably do these things, but imagine you had, what then would your interpretation of my aesthetic be?

I can't help but to include some of my own opinion; the tragedy of architecture design students (and perhaps all disciplines of academia) is the disconnect between theory and adoption. I mean everyone acknowledges how space influences behavior. Culture is not just itself regional, but beholden to its region, and furthermore a consequence of the region. And any good student knows this, and the walls of their building are lined with small-scale models revolutionizing upon the basis of this principle. And yet their idealisms are most often impractical (unimplementable), and so remain literal miniature microcosms of unrealized potential.

I attest the burden the creator has in perpetuating their message; that is to permeate the predispositions of their audience, for these masses are often malleable (perhaps you've heard the saying "people don't know what they want"). Though it may seem daunting, and perhaps even disillusioning; those that truly aspire for their artform must accept that the path to their righteousness is both narrow and treacherous. Because righteousness in artistry is to be understood as the achievement of recognition (that the audience receives your work) in the realization of the genuine aims of one's work. And irrespective of your moral compass, your modality should always be *genuine*; that you strive to achieve this in a meaningful way; that you aren't contradicting your artform in your advertising of it.

Though as this essay isn't narrated amidst a scenic backdrop, doesn't *that* make it hypocritical? Momentarily suspend the senses: you're simply reading this as a standard-formatted document; Calibri font and all, though if instead I were speaking to you, rather than your reading, and your eyes were closed, and you are just now to *hear* the words, rather than listen, wouldn't that change their momentary interpretation?

This transitions seamlessly into the discussion of symbolic (indirect) appearance. I have a tendency to transcribe in a tactful temperament. This is to say my delivery is methodical, which is in this case apparent to say I like making use of alliteration. Though even in seemingly secondary attributes, their conveying is paramount (perhaps

even doubly-so). If you are conveying a theme through theater, your medium is choreography, if in film; cinematography, and in being an essayist; well, it's language:

In comparing our language (the medium of communication), perhaps no better science of (case) study surpasses that of fashion; specifically the prose description of a literal garment. Through the consideration of semiotics and semantics, we understand symbolism to contribute a great deal to our word choice. Let's compare now synonyms: to sweat or to perspire? Their origin roots differ; one Germanic, the other Latinate, and even in reading them visually there is an inherent connotative conclusion drawn from the reader.

History is the consequence to the point above, perhaps you've heard the saying "victors write history"? And I like to use that word a lot; 'consequence', itself appearing a handful of times throughout this essay, but to understand your societal position, you must recognize you're the culmination of the consequences of your forebears. The English language is the consequence of its Anglo-Saxon foundation intertwined with a large later-adopted Latinate, this, casually-speaking, is largely owed to the result of the Battle of Hastings of 1066. And if the battle had yielded a different outcome, then our language would look entirely different from what we know it to be today. This moves me toward understanding the precarious equilibrium we presently live within; that (and giving credence to the butterfly effect) our present biases (of our society) that constitute our nurture could've been something entirely different save for a few changes in the outcomes we know to be true from the past.

What I'm saying, more apparently, is the meaning for which our artforms attempt to convey, and how they're attempted to be conveyed, are both the product of our predispositions; that of which the ends of our nature have led us, tandemly with the nurture for which has influenced us. I've mentioned films and plays, which've culminated on my theorized newfound purpose of video games as an artform, and yet I ask myself whether my deduction was itself a product of predisposition. Nonetheless, I justify this acknowledgment (as the struggle of the artist, and) as the merit for which the study of history should rest on.

And if history is so very important in connecting with an audience (the understanding of their culture), then perhaps time is ultimately what all the aforementioned are beholden to. Scientifically, sound is the result of pressure traveling through the air, causing vibrations, and of course our ears translate these vibrations as the sound we hear. Likewise with our vision, it's simply the traveling of light; that of which our eyes translate; resulting in what we see. And just as anything to do with everything living; every experience is both ceaseless (within its natural bounds) and finite (the bounds themselves). The events of Romeo and Juliette spanned a meager five

days, though if instead all the major plot points spanned five entire years, would they hold the same effect? This is of course to raise the point that the creator has a clock which they must decide on, and work within. Because if every available moment is precious, it must carry with it an intent which contributes to the whole. Though why push a narrative so overtly? I mean aren't the simple, spontaneous (and insignificant) actions of our peers the very grounds for which new philosophical views (and religions) are founded upon?

And so, maybe a brief point on existentialism? Milan Kundera published "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" in 1984: a book which explored this idea amidst the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. It's a reflection of the epitome of being, really: amongst the intersection of love, career ambition, and life's ultimate purpose, it was really dissatisfying- that is when I first read it, as there wasn't neat resolution. The "happily ever after" of the characters was largely an uneasy equilibrium, somewhere between existential dread and displaced satisfaction. And you're largely meant to feel dissatisfied; that these forces of man which we idealistically interpret in our literature as divine are actually indifferent to our interpersonal desires, and that, in the end, we are entitled to nothing, and that no one is entitled to us.

Irrespective, I ask myself; can my artform transcend this hurdle? That is; can my art carry a divine purpose? One enveloped in righteousness whereas I can instill a message within an audience for which resonates far beyond the relative bounds of space and time? Perhaps not, though with the acknowledgement that I am ultimately beholden to my nature, I nonetheless resolve to chance fate anyways. I want this to be a manifesto: to confess my moral principles, introduce my motives, and demonstrate the means for which I intend on utilizing in the conveying of ideas for which I espouse. I attest my predisposition and surrender this bias before you in the hopes that, for whatever mistakes I am prone to make, I can atleast be understood in my rationale. I now conclude it is my axiom that, by the knowledge which has been instilled within me (as well as my wisdom), I am to move forward empowered in that if by no other way than for retribution should I aspire to achieve an ascendance in my artistry; an actualization far surpassing anything for which I could've ever reasonably imagined, additionally for those that'd bear witness to its advancement of an artform evermore authentic; inseparably me :)