

Game Design

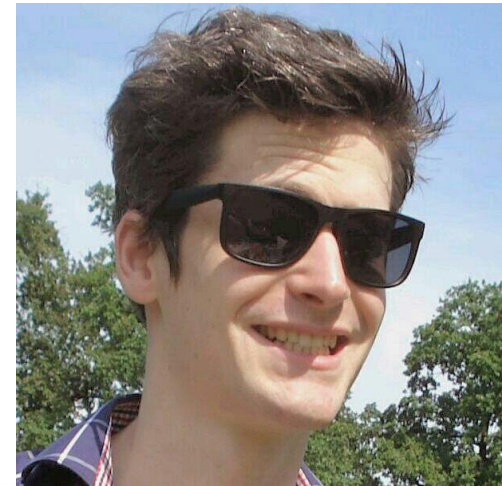
Game design workshop



Marries van de Hoef

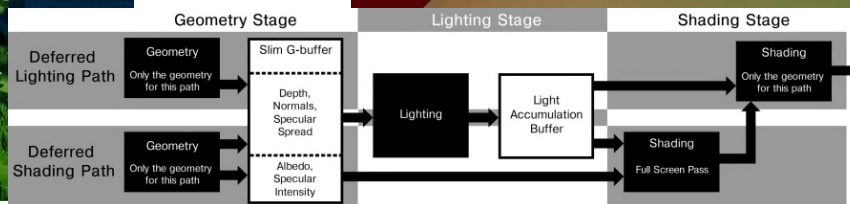
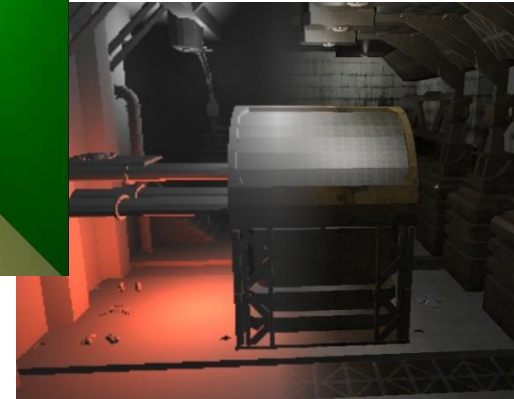
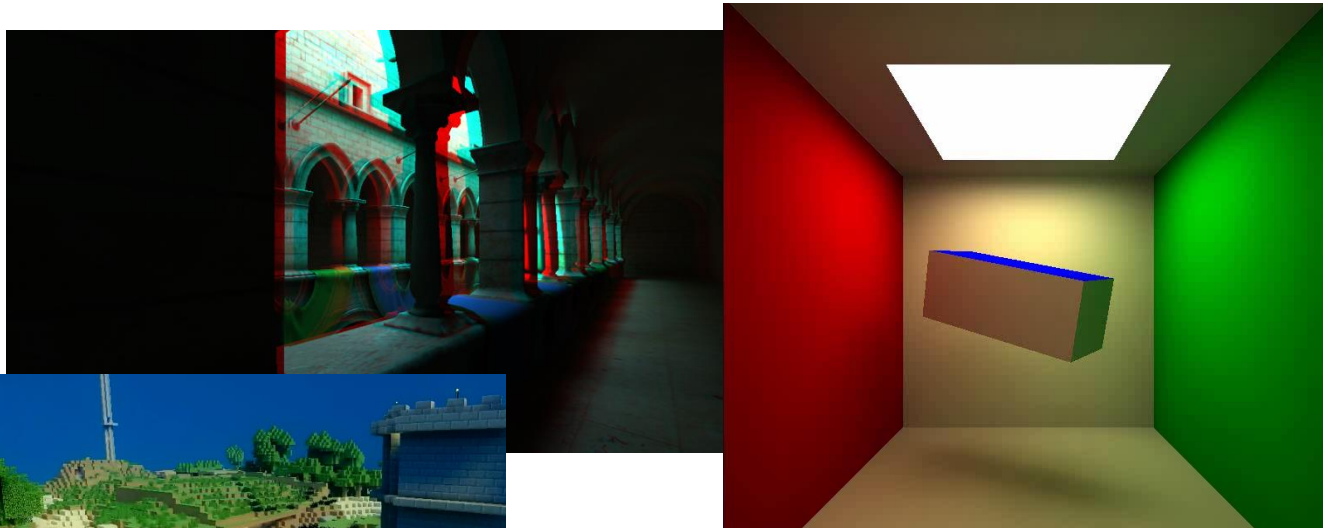
Lecturer at Utrecht University

- Department of information and computing sciences
- Recreated the Game Design course
- Supervising cooperative projects with the HKU School of the Arts



Lecturer

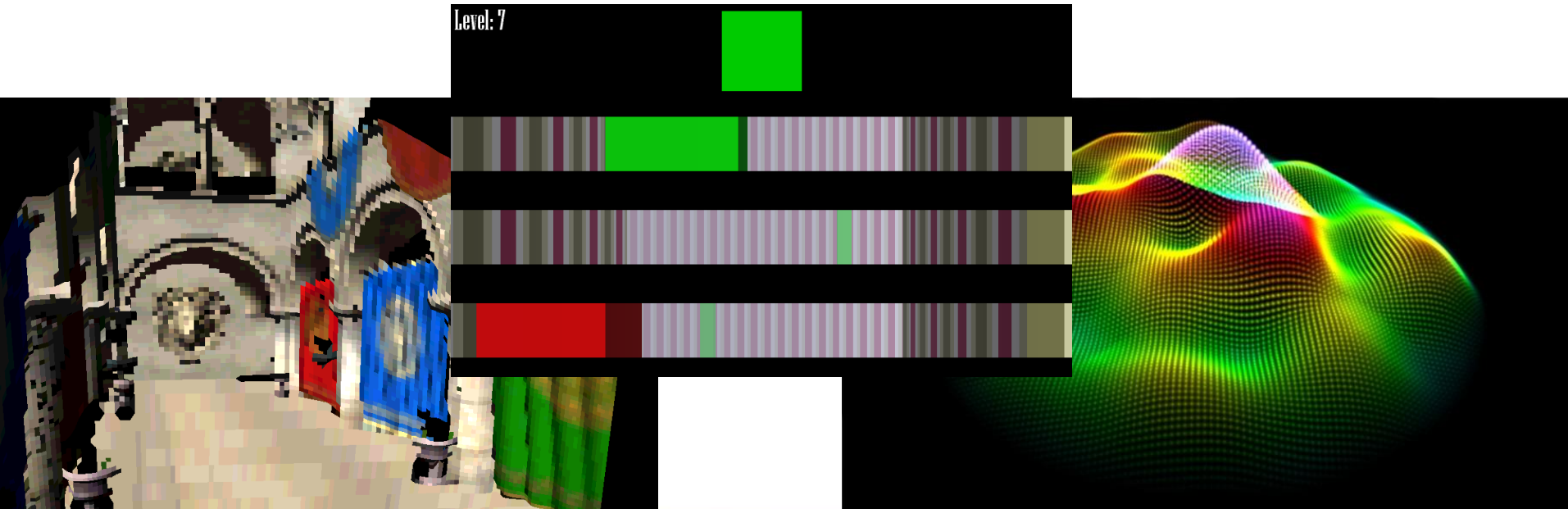
Rendering research – Fancy pictures:



Developer

Experimental game developer

- Investigating the boundaries of what games can be
- Well connected with the Dutch game industry



Workshop

The goal: Experience difficulties in the game development process from the game designer perspective

- The difficulty of communicating game concepts
- The difficulty of agreeing on one concept
- How game ideas differ from practice

First iteration of this workshop

Theory from “The Art of Game Design” by Jesse Schell

- Supplemented with personal experience



Teamwork and communication

The iterative process

Workshop introduction

TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION



The game designer

In general, the game designer is *responsible* for the *experience*

- Yes, that's intentionally vague

Example tasks:

- Game concept development
- Communication with the team about the game
- The actual game design
- Playtesting
- Community building and maintenance



The game designer

The game designer is **not** “the idea guy”

A game is created by a team

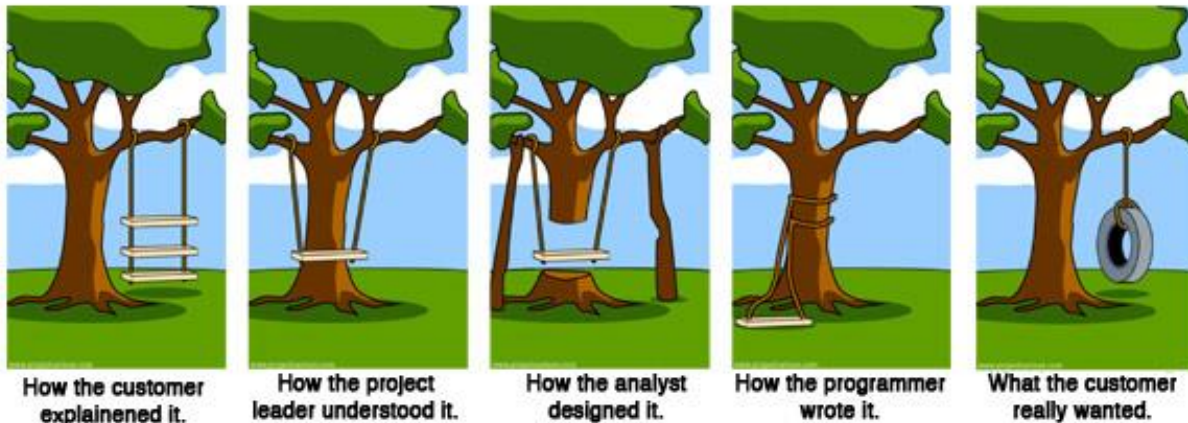
- Everyone can have great ideas
 - Ideas are not as special as commonly thought
- Being involved is essential for team motivation
 - Feel that the game is *also* yours, not *only* someone else’s
- Difficult process, requires everyone to have a team spirit.

The game designer is **not** the boss



Share the vision

- Everyone should have exactly the same vision
- Otherwise everyone in the team is working on a *different game*



The game designer should communicate the vision well and extensively



Communication

Examples:

- Sketches
- Interactive presentation
- Paper prototype
- Short game concept document

An extensive Game Design Document is rarely used for initial communication



Teamwork and communication

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THE ITERATIVE PROCESS

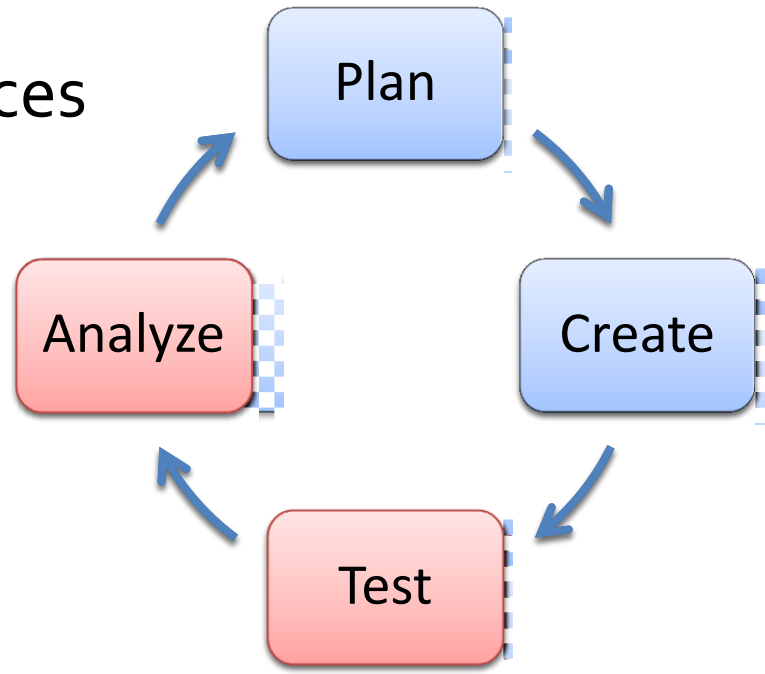


The iterative process

Iterate a lot and do each iteration quickly

- We need to be able to make fundamental changes
- Each change introduces new issues

Fail fast, fail often



Playtesting

Playtesting is testing the game experience

- Is it “fun”?
- **Not** QA/bug testing, **not** usability testing

Playtesting is difficult for game designers

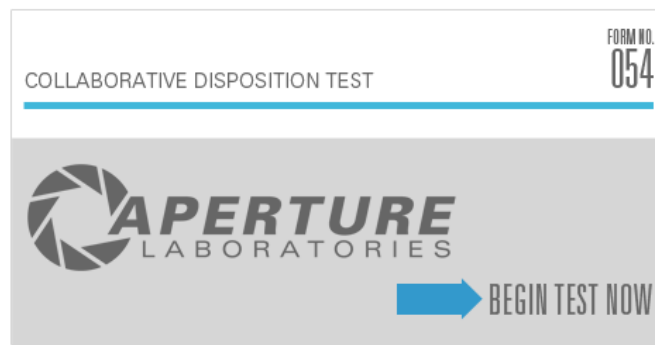
- About finding imperfections in their brainchild



Playtesting

Playtesting outcomes

- Answers to known design questions
- Discovering unknown aspects of your game
 - Unexpected problems
 - General observations



Conducting playtests

Known design questions

- A post-play questionnaire
 - Concrete questions, measurable outcomes
- Specific points of attention during playtest observation

Unknown aspects

- Open questions (in questionnaire)
- Be a keen observer during the playtest

More details can be found in “The Art of Game Design”
by Jesse Schell



Evaluation

Analyze playtesting results thoroughly

- Identify key problems / opportunities

Important part of the iterative cycle

- Often underestimated



Teamwork and communication

The iterative process

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WORKSHOP INTRODUCTION



Workshop

Modify the game Tic-tac-toe

Two complete iterations of the game design process

- Plan, Create, Test, Analyze
- Each stage is timeboxed

Teams of 4

- Assigned by the workshop leader



Phase 1: plan/idea

Modify the game Tic-tac-toe

- Decide on a process with the group
 - E.g.: Individual brainstorming, group brainstorming, ...
- Choose an idea and write it down

Be creative with your modifications. Think WAY outside of the box

- “Extend grid size” is too simple
- “Add a third player with a 4x4 grid” is a bit better
- “Ability to move a sign instead of placing one” is even better
- Try to go even further with your creativity
 - Think of something the other teams won't think of



Phase 2: implementation

Create a paper prototype

- Specify *all* game rules. Be complete.
- Create any required properties
 - E.g.: in the movable signs example, create sign cards
- Play the game with your team to see if it works
 - Make adjustments to the rules until it works



Phase 3: playtesting

Preparation:

- Think of any concerns you have about your design
- Formulate design questions
 - Is an important game-rule clear to players or too complex?
 - Does the game provide interesting decisions
- Create a short questionnaire
 - About 4 questions
 - Use closed questions with measurable results



Phase 3: playtesting

Several rounds of playtesting

- Alternating between even and odd teams
- For a 2 player game: 2 players, 2 playtest supervisors

Think of both the design questions and the unknown aspects

- Observe and take notes
- Conduct the questionnaire afterwards



Phase 4: evaluation

Discuss playtesting outcomes

- Formulate answers to design questions
- Summarize important unknown aspects

Formulate the main problems and opportunities

- Don't digress too quickly into the next phase!



Second iteration

Phase 1: plan/idea

- Think of changes to the game based on your evaluation

Phase 2: implementation

- Specify the new game rules and create any material

Phase 3: playtesting

- Similar to the first iteration
- Try to use (some of) the same questionnaire questions

Phase 4: evaluation

- Similar to the first iteration
- Compare questionnaire outcomes with the first iteration



Workshop game design

Introduction lecture

Group formation

Phase 1: create the idea

Phase 2: implementation



Workshop game design

Introduction lecture

Group formation

Phase 1: create the idea

Phase 2: implementation

Phase 3: playtest preparation



Workshop game design

Group formation

Phase 1: create the idea

Phase 2: implementation

Phase 3: playtest preparation

Phase 3: playtesting



Workshop game design

Phase 1: create the idea

Phase 2: implementation

Phase 3: playtest preparation

Phase 3: playtesting

Phase 4: evaluation



Workshop game design

Phase 2: implementation

Phase 3: playtest preparation

Phase 3: playtesting

Phase 4: evaluation

Plenary evaluation



Workshop game design

Phase 3: playtest preparation

Phase 3: playtesting

Phase 4: evaluation

Plenary evaluation

Phase 1 and 2: modify idea & prototype



Workshop game design

Phase 3: playtesting

Phase 4: evaluation

Plenary evaluation

Phase 1 and 2: modify idea & prototype

Phase 3: playtest preparation



Workshop game design

Phase 4: evaluation

Plenary evaluation

Phase 1 and 2: modify idea & prototype

Phase 3: playtest preparation

Phase 3: playtesting



Workshop game design

Plenary evaluation

Phase 1 and 2: modify idea & prototype

Phase 3: playtest preparation

Phase 3: playtesting

Phase 4: evaluation



Workshop game design

Phase 1 and 2: modify idea & prototype

Phase 3: playtest preparation

Phase 3: playtesting

Phase 4: evaluation

Plenary evaluation



Workshop game design

Phase 3: playtest preparation

Phase 3: playtesting

Phase 4: evaluation

Plenary evaluation



Workshop game design

Phase 3: playtesting

Phase 4: evaluation

Plenary evaluation

