Here at Misscliks we like to promote strong female characters, characters that model what the representation of the female genre should look like. Most often, we praise characters that distances itself from stereotypes and conventional representation of feminity: badass characters. What about the others? Frail framed princesses and tear tainted girls? I believe they have their own value too; what if Braid was the princess he tried to save. What if the princess of the main character of the story and tried to save herself? Monument valley answers all of these questions.

Puzzle games always feel original to me; I always feel like most of the press’ attention is driven toward more “exciting” games, more blockbuster-ish. This time, Monument Valley asks you to solve the problems to achieve a very simple objective: guide the muted princess through her ventures. To do so, you have to manipulate the environment that lays obstacles before her, however, those obstacles are only a matter of perspective… literally. Moving objects in front of other will not only occlude vision from a particular gap, but might also bridge two surfaces that are not physically supposed to be connected, in both cases creating a navigable path. This mind bogging fact that what should be is not and the fact that you need to rethink the logic behind simple environment analysis gives the game an authentic yet graspable way of presenting puzzles.

It goes without saying that one of the game’s major plus is the lush visuals depicted uniquely drawn in each level. As the game rely a lot on observation in order to solve the puzzles in which you are thrown it is a great achievement to have reached such a high level of aesthetics and integrating to the gameplay. Desolated ruins will come alive as the faint lightning contrasts the colors of washed walls you try to find your way by. The traditional gameplay aspect is also very compelling but I found the visuals were an entertaining part of the game.

What about the character? The muted princess is not really anything else than her nickname tells us: a little girl that has not much to say. It seems her presence in the deserted lands does not really fit with her childish appearance; she does not look like much of an adventurer. As the story unfolds, you come to understand her presence and the noble origin of her quest. In fact, the choice of the character ends up fitting gracefully with the game’s looks and the child’s might have been the best card to play. In a way, it makes use of the archetypal character that is the princess but now in a much more self-determined way, which also adds value to character design.

Puzzle games sometimes may not be required to have strong and round characters to enhance the experience since, sometimes, the main concern is giving the player enough puzzles to work on in order to have an interesting product. Unfortunately, content is far from massive. After a few ten minutes puzzles, the end of the game shows its unwanted silhouette as you just have started to gain immersion into the game. Even though it is enough to be more than a proof of concept, the game left me wanting a lot more, which is only good in a particular way.

The beautiful lands that were once the ones of the muted princess are no longer of her possessions, but it still is pleasurable to wander in its vestiges. The general feel of the game has a lot to do with its presentation: visuals and shy soundtrack unite to give the player something much greater. Even though Monument Valley is a game by definition, I like to think about it as a piece of art that finds its way through entertainment.

Pros

High quality artistic visuals

Original puzzle solving rationale

Cons

Very short

Monument Valley is before and all a piece of art. Sure puzzles are what brings all these parts together and deliver them as a cohesive whole, but the game’s presentation makes it so appealing it cannot be overstated. While the game is very short, it still is worth spending a couple dollars, and this for the originality and enjoyment that you will get out of it.