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CART 263

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Proposal – Project II

I have studied fashion design and have been working in the industry for a few years now. From sales consultant to 3d artist of virtual changing rooms based on customers' own body measurements, I have personally witnessed how problematic the binary system of the fashion industry is. Flat disregard for trans people's needs, including trans men, women, and non-binary people (trans or not), as well as cis cross-dressing people have made it possible for the industry to normalize micro-aggressive behavior towards a growing number of customers. In this project, I wish to highlight the absurdity and question the institutional gender dichotomy of the fashion industry and its implications on the mental health of its customers.

From institutions hovering over designers' creativity to intrusive comments from sales people, or even how an online user experience is built can lead people to feel unsafe and/or dysphoric from the simple fact of buying something to dress and express themselves with. For instance, the 'changing-room' widget the company I work for only gives customers the option to try clothes that are gendered according to their body's biological sex, completely neglecting that breast bearing people could potentially want to buy something from the masculine selection of the store and vice versa. Somewhat expected from the commercial players of the industry, this sad – and very boring binary system is also taught in fashion schools today. Teachers supposed to develop our creativity and push the boundaries of possibilities are quick to critique feminine silhouettes on a man or the opposite, usually preferring mild androgynous looks for a 'bold' statement.

All these widely overlooked problematics of the fashion industry led me to imagine a conventional dress up game with a twist. Starting as a first-person point of view, the player will enter a 'physical' clothing store and will promptly be welcomed by an employee by using dialogue boxes and different answer choices impacting the resulted experience. Presented with the two conventional feminine and masculine sections of the store, the player chooses which one they want to browse. However, based on this decision alone, the game assumes the gender,

biological sex, and gender expression of the player. For instance, if the player chooses to browse through the feminine section, then they will automatically be given a female body and will be addressed as a woman.

After choosing the gendered section, the player will be presented with the assigned body and all the clothes available in the store, whether masculine or feminine. This is to give the player the impression that this is an 'understanding' environment and a safe space, mimicking the hypocritical behavior of a majority of fashion brands and companies. The goal is to create an aesthetic very similar to conventional online dress up games with store-like décor and soothing music.

The player will have no problem dressing the silhouette with its 'appropriate' gendered clothes, meaning that female bodies will be able to be dressed in feminine clothing without any glitch. However, whenever the player will drag a gender-crossing garment, the game will break a little upon the clothing piece being dropped on the body. The store employee will express a micro-aggression towards the player –all inspired from real life events or discussions I or people I know have had with actors of the industry (teachers, employers, colleagues, customers…) before putting back the 'inappropriate' clothing piece back on the rack or wherever it came from. Glitches will increase the more the player chooses 'cross-dressing' garments according to the biological sex of their silhouette, until they break the game altogether. What happens then remains undecided.

It is important to note that prior to entering the store, the player will be asked if they want to go through the game without these micro-aggressions and resulting effects. If they choose so, they will be able to choose whatever body is most appropriate for them and will be able to try whichever clothes without any effects on their experience. The point of the game being to inform and critique the binary system of the fashion industry without triggering negative emotions from people who are already deeply affected by it.

All the assets from clothes to avatars and store-like background will be made by yours truly, as I will be able to create garments and silhouettes that are aesthetically fitting in any kind of combination so as to be able to use any garments on any bodies when played on the game version that allows for it.

I am planning on using jquery, jquery UI as well as p5 and p5.sound libraries to complete my work. Draggable and droppable items will most definitely be presented using both jquery libraries. Sounds and other user interactions will most likely be implemented with p5, as I have a better understanding of those libraries and will make for more efficient work. I am still unsure as to how I will create the dialogue boxes between the employee and the player. Since I have not done anything similar to this in previous project, this is definitely a challenge I will face.

Another challenge I will have to work with is the customizable experience of the player and its effect on the experience of the game. Creating different states of play depending on the choices of the players while maintaining a tidy and simple code will be very important for me, as I have a harder time wrapping my head around more abstract coding methodologies. I am looking forward to getting better at this, and I believe this idea of multi-choice and customizable experience will further my understanding of such methods.

Something else I am really looking forward to understanding better in the idea of symbolically 'breaking' the game. This will be a good way to test different effects and simulated glitches that my previous games' aesthetics and core ideas have not allowed me to do. I am still unclear as to how I will do that, as I have never looked into it or experimented with it, but I am excited at the prospect of learning how to.

50/50 MAN AND WOMAN GENDERED CLOTHES THAT WILL BE PRESENTED AROUND THE AVATAR AND AVAILABLE TO TRY ON

HALF WAY BETWEEN BORING AVATAR AND TOO ABSTRACT CARTOONISH, YET REALISTIC WITH MOVEMENT