Paper Simulations of Digital Games

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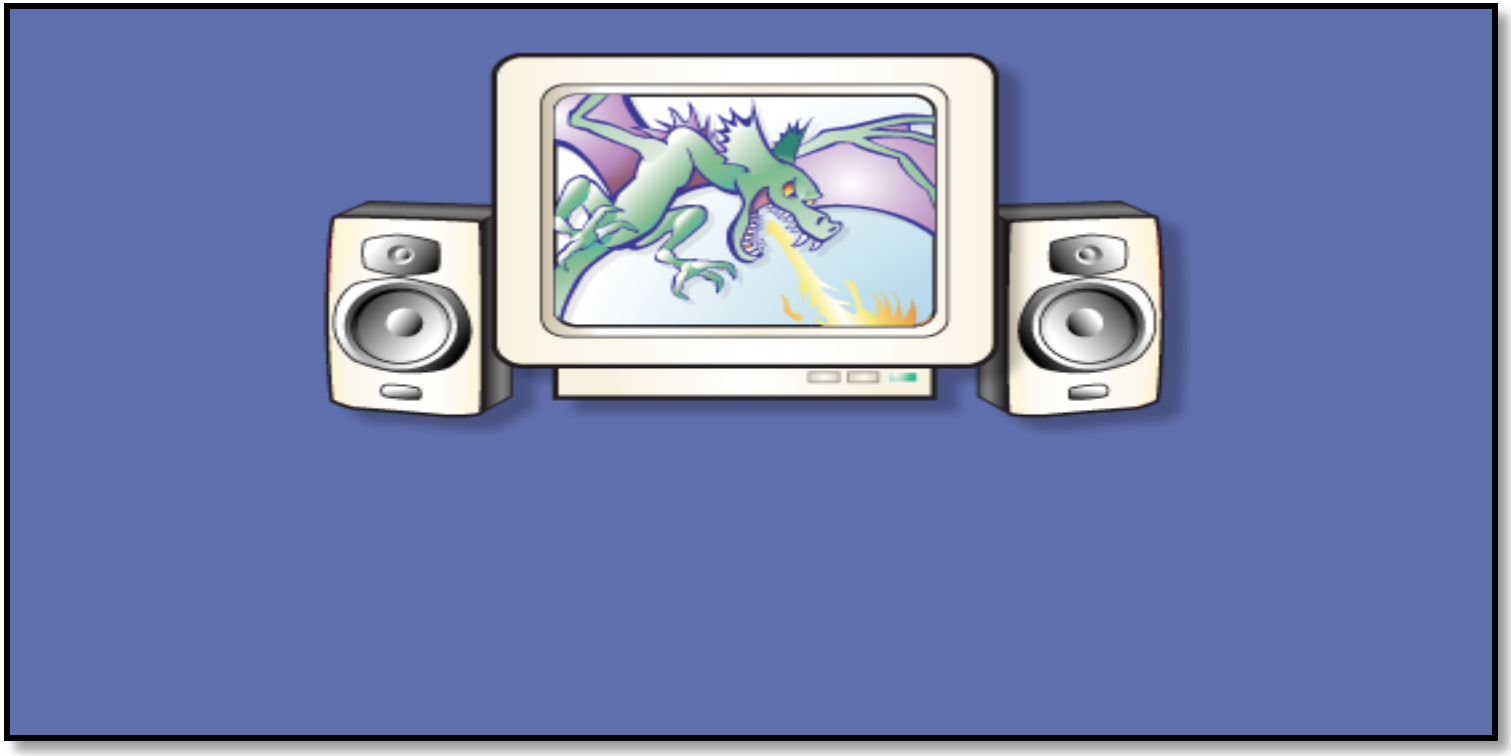
Creative Director, EA/Maxis

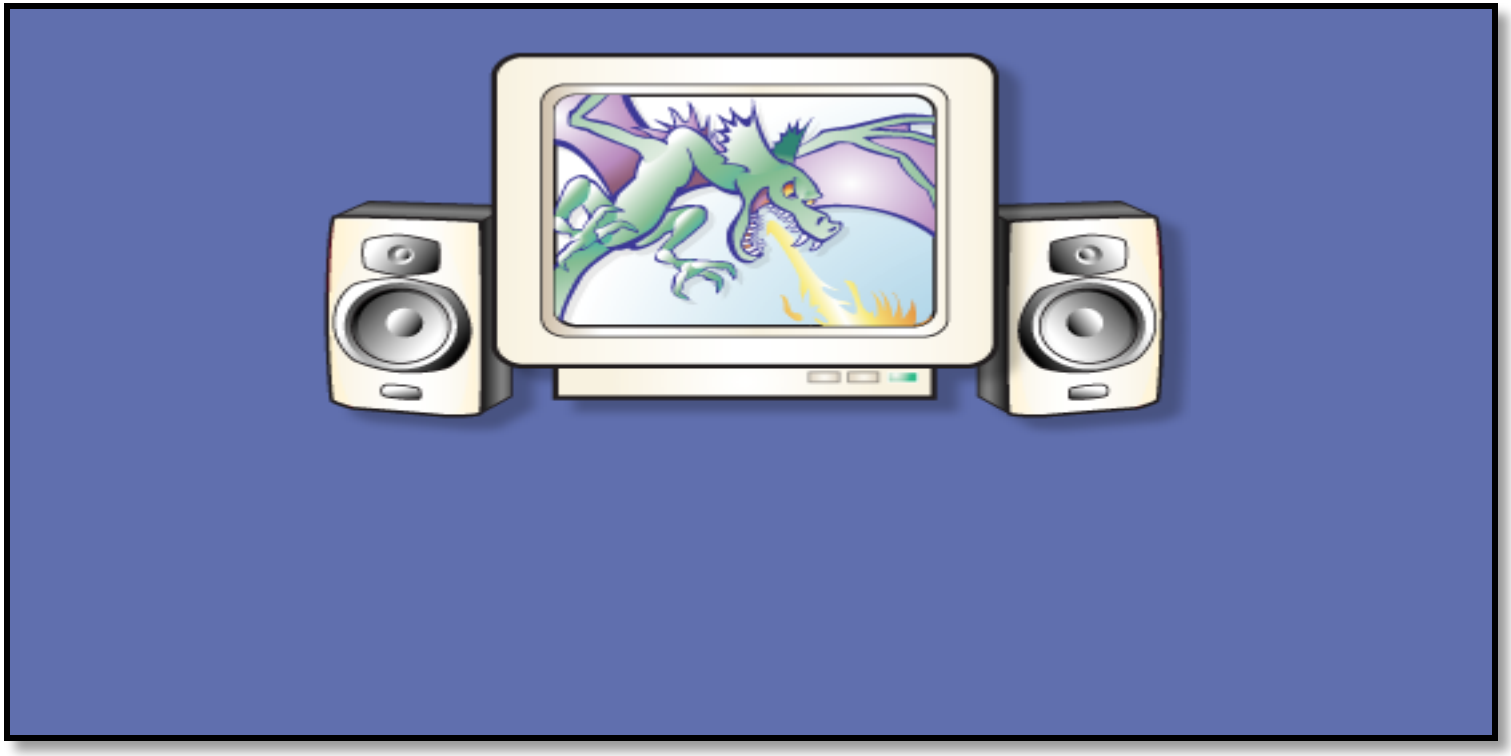
Take a digital game…

…remove the controller…

…remove the controller…



…the sound and music…



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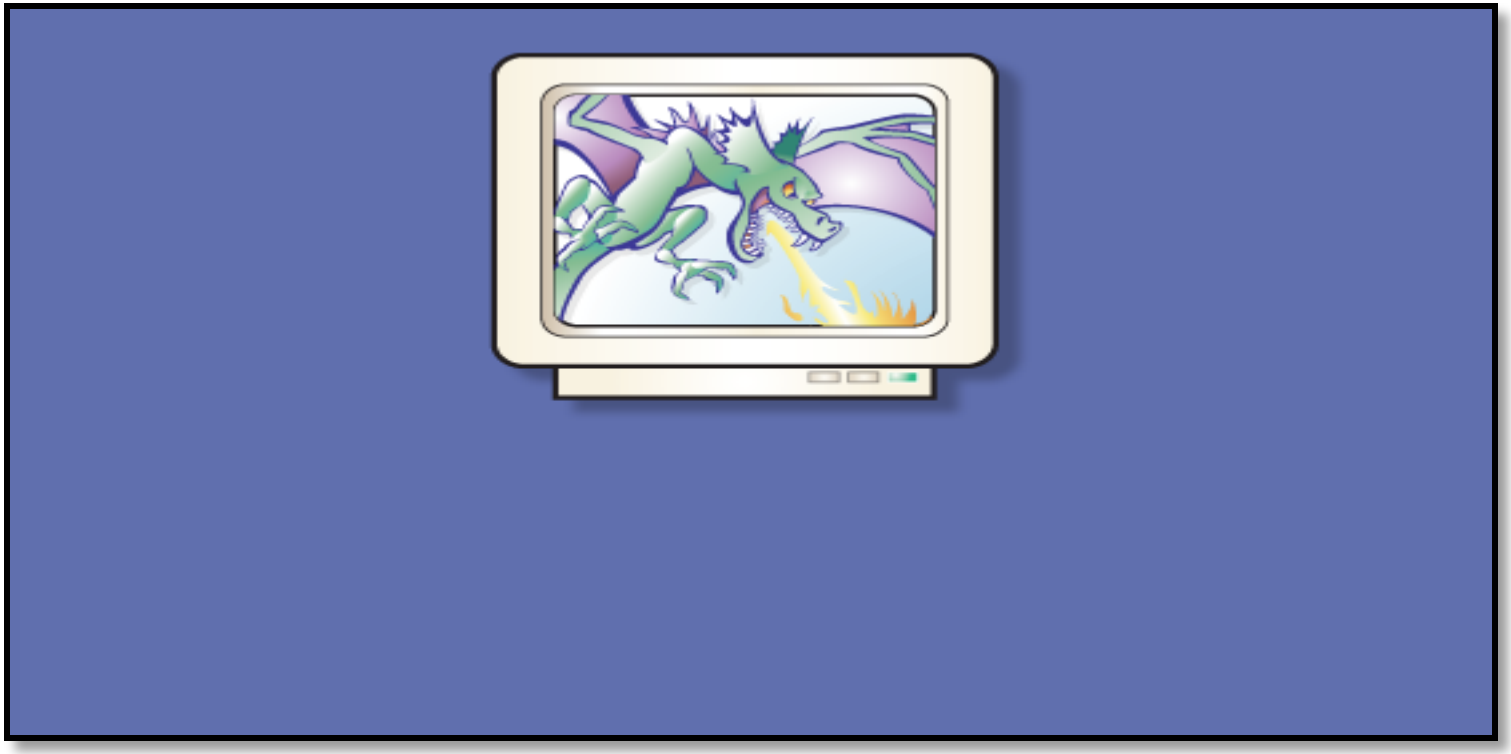
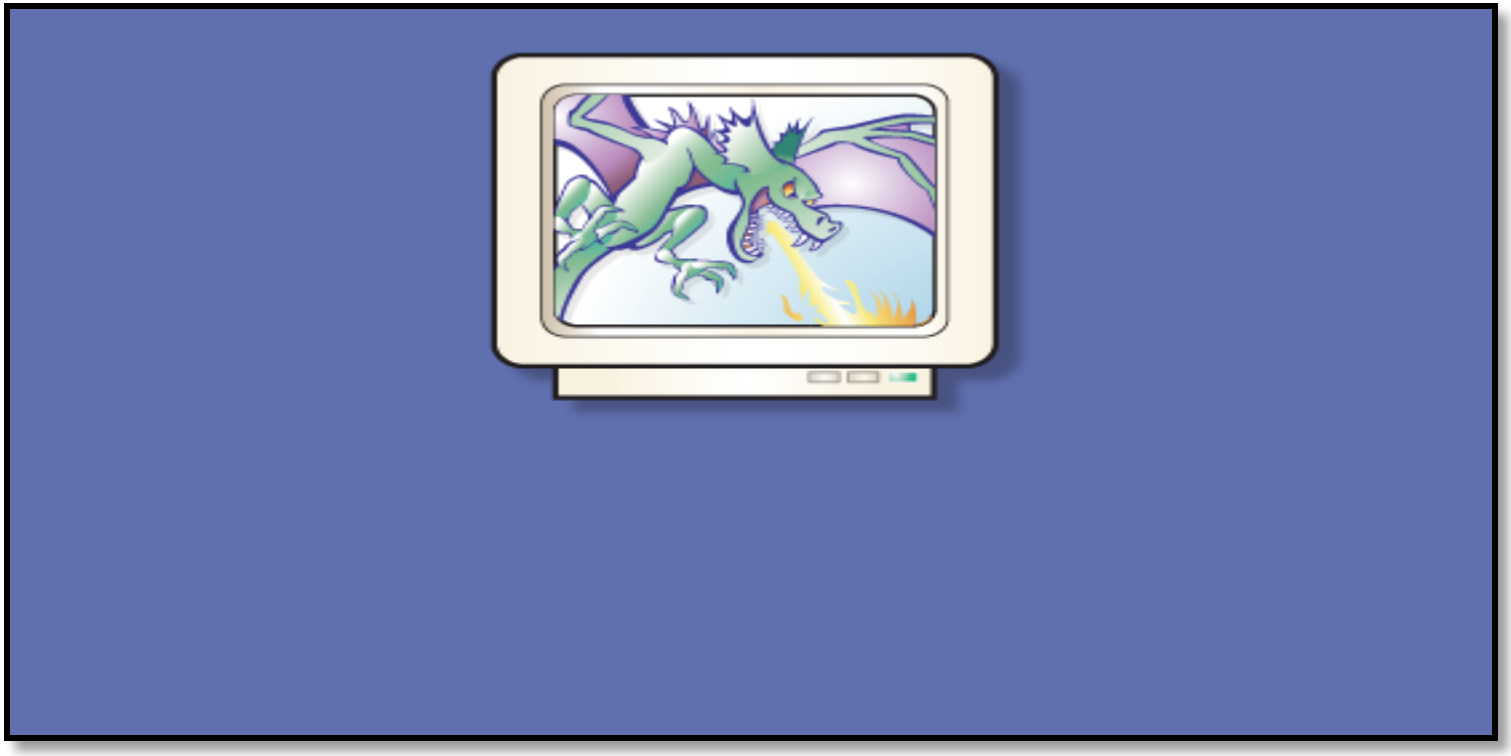


…and the graphics



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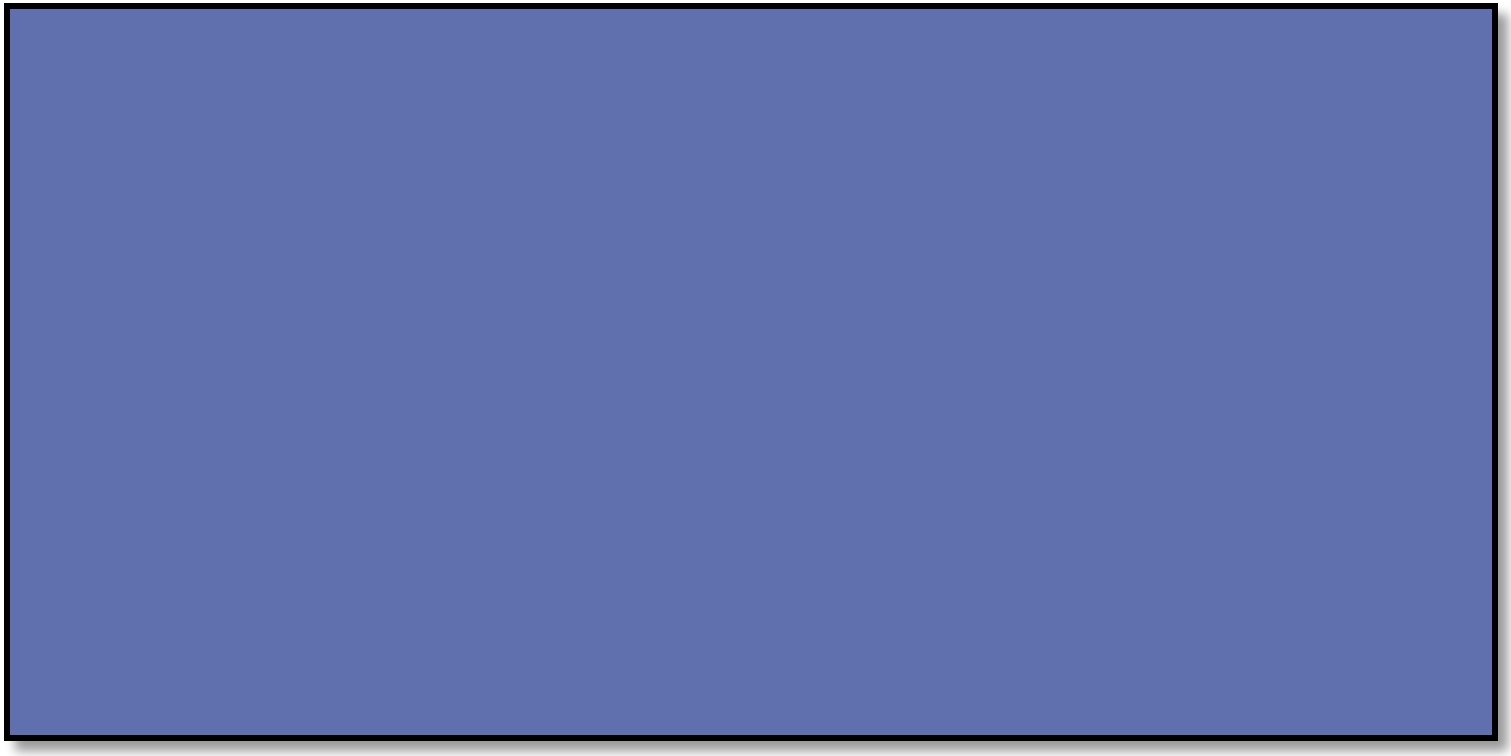
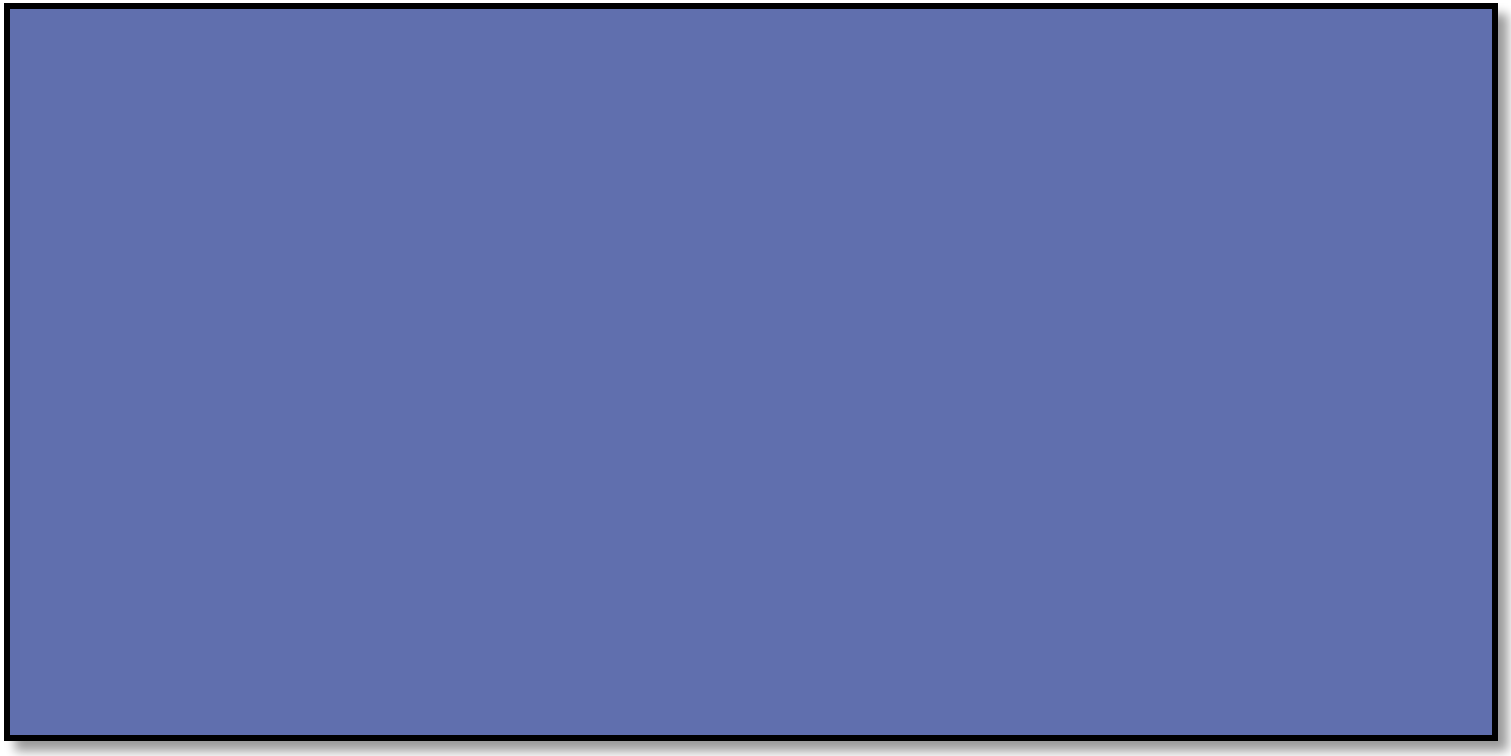


What's left?



Exercise #2

- Simulate a video game using only pencils, index cards and dice.
- Use it as a tool to help understand the game's fundamental design principles.
- Don't sweat the details.

Example Game

- *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater*

Example Game

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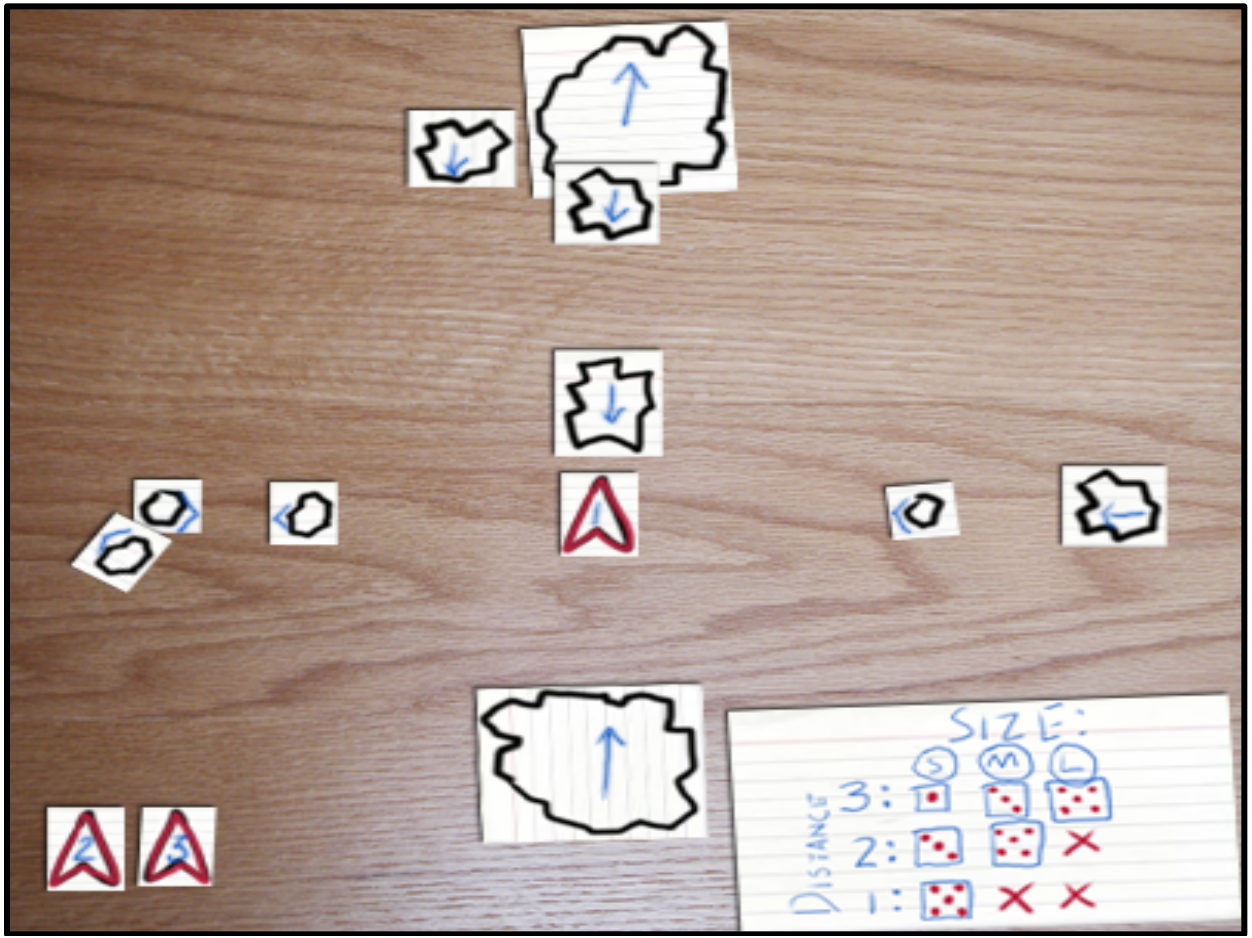
- *Asteroids*

- *Asteroids*



- *Warcraft*

  The Board Game

- *Warcraft*

  The Card Game

- *Civilization*
  The Card Game

Exercise

- Select a digital game
- Make a paper prototype
- What aesthetics survive the change in medium?

Brainstorm

- Name some games to “unplug.”
- Break into groups

Build a Paper Version

- **What To Do**
  - Identify your game's play aesthetics
  - Choose one aesthetic element to capture
  - Write it down and put it in the middle of your table
  - Identify the game actions that create that feeling

Build a Paper Version

- **What Not to Do**
  - Don’t sweat the details
  - Don’t try to duplicate the whole game
  - Don’t focus on simulating computer functions
  - Don’t make a board!

Beta Test at 3:15

Try to have something playable quickly!
Iterate!

Beta Test

- Send two testers to other tables.
- Test until 3:45

Discussion

Let's share results.

- What aesthetics did you capture?
- What did you leave out?

The Message

- **Play transcends media.**
  - Mechanics
  - Dynamics
  - Aesthetics
- **Sometimes.**

Using Paper Prototypes

- Good for understanding existing games.
- Use these techniques for games in progress.
- Process is quick and cheap.
- You don’t need programmers or artists.

Using Paper Prototypes

- Can’t replace actual gameplay testing.
- Can give you a head start and keep you focused.
- Creates a vocabulary to use when discussing your game.
- Can be used as a tool to educate other team members. Have them play, too!

Elective C

- **236:** Iron Game Designer
- **224:** Facebook Hoedown
- **222:** Feelin’ GRUVI