Coming Home: Art and the Great Hunger: A Case Study in Game Development for an Exhibition

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Abstract— This case study covers the process of initial ideation and brainstorming to the completion of a new game about the Irish famine (The Great Hunger). Implemented as a single player turn-based game it is an interdisciplinary collaboration between Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University, PreviewLabs of New Haven/Belgium with contributions by students and faculty from the Game Design & Development Program at Quinnipiac. Targeting children aged 10 to 13, the game was designed to accompany the Museum's 2018 traveling exhibition, Coming Home: Art and the Great Hunger, touring Ireland at Dublin Castle, Skibbereen's West Cork Arts Centre, and Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin in Derry.

Keywords—the great hunger, exhibition, educational games, brainstorming, game development

I. THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition, Coming Home: Art and the Great Hunger—sponsored by Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University (IGHM), in collaboration with Dublin Castle, Skibbereen's West Cork Arts Centre and Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin in Derry, Ireland—represents an act of cultural reconnection with Ireland's past and living diaspora—and is a major cultural, educational and tourist event, worthy of local, national and international interest.

The long story of the Great Famine (1845–52), and its diaspora, is told in Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University. Through its display of outstanding historical and contemporary images, the museum interprets the Famine visually. Images summon the past and are a form of evidence of events not captured by the written word. Artworks by some of the most eminent Irish and Irish-American artists of the past 170 years, fulfill one of the obligations of memory: honoring the dead.

II. THE GAME

This case study covers the process of initial ideation and brainstorming to the completion of a new game about the Irish famine (The Great Hunger) and serves to complement and deepen the appreciation of artwork in the exhibition. Initial development took place through a process of idea generation and selection, which led to the concept of a 2D single player turn-based game that focuses on nutrition management and health maintenance contrasting contemporary dietary choices with the limited nutritional options during the famine.

Fig. 1. Screen Shots. Foods choices available in 1845 in contrast to contemporary times.

Findings include:

- How to determine brainstorm requirements and constraints, involving relevant stakeholders.

- How brainstorming consists of two phases.

- How no idea is too crazy in the first phase of a brainstorm – examples included.

- How the second phase of the brainstorm focuses on putting concepts to the test by fleshing them out and enabling critical – but constructive – thinking.

The game is targeted towards 10-13 year olds. While traditional art forms like painting and sculpture are contemplated from a distance, this game directly engages this younger audience in gameplay that enriches their understanding of the impact of famine not only upon those who suffered and died during those 'bad times' but will promote an awareness that famines (human made) are still taking their terrible toll in today's world.

This project was coordinated by Bernard Francois of PreviewLabs in New Haven/Belgium with additional support from the Museum Staff, Professors Greg Garvey and Jonah Warren along with student interns from the Program in Game Design & Development at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut.

Original plans called for the game to be deployed in conjunction with the Coming Home exhibition in Ireland. It is anticipated that approximately 30,000 people will view the exhibition during the exhibitions in Ireland. The game may also be available to play at Ireland's Great Hunger Museum, and distributed online at some future date.

A major goal of the project is to expand on the exhibition and relate the Irish Famine to other issues such as food insecurity, genocide, forced migrations, etc., and create

empathy amongst visitors. This project also serves as a model for future collaborations between the Museum, the Game Design & Development program and private entities such as PreviewLabs.

III. BIOS

A. Jonah Warren

Jonah Warren, Assistant Professor of Game Design and Development, is a designer, developer, and educator with over 15 years of experience creating playful interactive experiences. His installations and games have been exhibited in festivals and museums around the world and have appeared in WIRED and Adobe Magazine. He has also worked on a number of award-winning educational games including Ayiti: The Cost of Life which has been cited as best practice in the Games for Change community and Teachley: Addimal Adventure which won an Apple Design Award in 2014.

B. Greg Garvey

Greg Garvey, MFA, MSVS, BS, is Director of the Game Design and Development Program at Quinnipiac University. After finishing a Masters of Visual Studies degree at MIT Greg Garvey worked at Parker Brothers and later Spinnaker Software developing mass market and educational games. Prior to joining Quinnipiac University Garvey was Chair of the Department of Design Art at Concordia University in Montréal and was a member of the Board of Directors of the Montreal Design Institute. From 1983-85 he was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT and later was appointed Associate Artist of the Digital Media Center for the Arts at Yale. His interactive computer based installations have been exhibited in museums and galleries in the U.S., Canada, Europe and elsewhere in venues such as the Landesmuseum in Linz, Austria; the Victoria and Albert Museum in London or at Tech Fest in Delhi, India.

C. Bernard Francois

Bernard Francois is the Co-founder of PreviewLabs which creates prototypes of interactives and games for clients including Walt Disney Imagineering and Yale University and other companies.

D. Student Team Members

Katherine Rosell is a junior and a major in the Game Design & Development program and created the artwork. Julian Papasian, graduated in May 2018 with a BA in Game Design & Development. Julian did the programming.

IV. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

The following staff members of Ireland's Great Hunger Museum at Quinnipiac University (IGHM) have provided additional support and coordination.

A. Claire Puzarne

Claire Puzarne, interim director of Ireland's Great Hunger Museum and project manager of *Coming Home: Art and The Great Hunger,* is coordinating the project. Puzarne is responsible for processing the museum's collection, managing fiscal operations, and planning and executing all public programming and events. She works with schools and learners of all ages to educate them about the museum's collection. She holds a BA in history, Boston University, and an MA in public history, California State University, Sacramento. She is currently enrolled in the MBA program at Quinnipiac.

B. Niamh O'Sullivan

Niamh O'Sullivan, curator of Ireland's Great Hunger Museum, provides visual and historical expertise to the project. O'Sullivan is Professor Emeritus of Visual Culture (National College of Art and Design, Ireland). She holds an MA, University College London, and a PhD, University College Dublin. Formerly head of education at the National Gallery of Ireland, she curated "The Eyes of a Child," National Gallery of Ireland, 1979 (Ireland's exhibition for the Year of the Child); the first retrospective exhibitions of Aloysius O'Kelly (Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane, 1999-2000); and Daniel Macdonald (Ireland's Great Hunger Museum, 2016). She is co-editor of the series, Famine Folios. She was chairperson of the Film Institute of Ireland, and served on the advisory committee, Royal Irish Academy, Irish Art and Architecture (2014).

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