

Artist Statement

Māyā is a choose-your-own-adventure game that explores the philosophical concept of illusion, rooted in the Sanskrit term *Māyā*. While *Māyā* is often loosely translated as "illusion" or "deception," the term carries a far more complex and layered meaning. It suggests that the material world we perceive is not the true reality, but rather a distraction, an intricate web that obscures what truly exists beyond our immediate understanding. Through this game, I aim to translate the nuances of *Māyā* into an interactive experience that invites the player to confront and question the nature of their existence.

The core of *Māyā* lies in the existential choice: do we accept the reality handed to us, or do we question the very fabric of it? As the player navigates through a shifting landscape of rooms - some eerily familiar, others completely disjointed - they begin to recognize fragments of memory and identity, yet nothing fully makes sense. The setting evokes a dreamlike state where the boundary between consciousness and illusion becomes increasingly blurred. Are you dreaming? Or is this your new reality?

The game questions not only the nature of reality but also the illusion of choice. While the player is presented with multiple decisions and branching paths, every choice ultimately leads back to one outcome: waking up in the same room where the journey began. This looping structure is a deliberate narrative choice that speaks to the inescapability of one's reality, no matter how deeply they attempt to unravel or reject it. It's not just about where you go, but about why you want to go, and whether you were ever truly in control.

The project evolved through several experimental phases, as I aimed to create an atmosphere that feels simultaneously surreal and grounded. Much of the visual and auditory experience is built from real-world materials such as photographed textures, field-recorded sounds, practical lighting setups, which were composed and manipulated using Blender, After Effects, and CapCut. The final interactive form was developed in 3JS, allowing me to embed the entire world into a web-based game format.

The game is best experienced in an intentionally nostalgic setting on a 90s CRT television with supported external surround sound and played using a minimalistic joystick crafted in collaboration with my friend Aaryan Pashine. This retro setup enhances the eerie, analog tone of the game and amplifies its psychological dissonance.

The tone of *Māyā* is unsettling, uncanny, and reflective. It doesn't offer concrete answers, but instead, it opens a space to wonder: if this reality is an illusion, do we choose to learn what's out there or do we continue to exist in this illusion that convinces us of life's significance?

Logline

Maya is a choose your own adventure game exploring the Sanskrit concept of illusion. It invites players to confront the boundaries between dream and reality, questioning whether the world they inhabit is genuine or a deception. As players move through surreal, shifting rooms, they face choices that seem challenging and meaningful, yet all loop back to the same place. This cyclical structure mirrors the inescapability of one's reality. Maya opens a space to wonder: if this reality is an illusion, do we choose to learn what's out there or do we continue to exist in this illusion that convinces us of life's significance?

Biography

Anisha Vatnani is a 3D animator, and game artist whose work blends digital mediums with hands-on experimentation. Currently pursuing her Bachelor of Fine Arts at OCAD University, Anisha is passionate about pushing the boundaries of game art through bold colors, surreal forms, and imaginative worldbuilding. While her primary focus is in 3D game art, she finds inspiration in physical materials and enjoys integrating traditional techniques into her digital creations. Her playful, otherworldly aesthetic reflects a deep curiosity and a drive to constantly evolve as an artist and storyteller.

Artist CV

Anisha Vatnani

3D Animator & Game Artist

Education

2021-2025: Bachelors of Fine Arts from OCAD University.

Experience

2024 : Junior Intern Artist at Big Viking Games.