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Experimental Games

Art Game Writeup:

Consumers

I used Doom 2 as raw materials for my art game. Part of the reason was that it’s one of the most modded game of all time, so it felt natural. I also have always wanted to try out level editing in an old game like Doom. It was fun! There was a lot to learn about the limitations of the game engine. Some of those tidbits: the game doesn’t support slopes; while technically rendered/played in 3D, the game doesn’t support rooms on top of other rooms, so it’s considered a 2.5D game; and several other things I can’t remember right now.

But the main reason was that this art game came from a place of anger, and the gameplay of Doom reflects that. My game is about the industry’s capacity to chew up and spit out its bright eyed, eager developers, whether immediately upon entering the field or after years/decades of experience. As I went through university and honed my skills, I first felt a sense of superiority over those who gave up on game development. “Oh, they just weren’t cut out for this work,” I’d say. But recently someone very talented told me that she’d decided against going into the games industry. After 5 years of learning how to craft what she loves, she’d realized that this industry was just not worth her energy.

At first, I was somewhat glad to hear her say that. “It’s better to focus on your mental health, she made the right choice,” I thought. But the more I thought about it, the angrier I got. Why should she have to make that choice? Over the past year I’ve come to realize that, hey, maybe it isn’t normal to have an industry where choosing the wrong store to publish your game on will net you a barrage of death threats. Maybe rampant sexism shouldn’t be encouraged and reinforced in employment contracts with private arbitration clauses. Maybe, just maybe, if you put in the time and skill towards a craft that nets billions of dollars in revenue, you should be rewarded with a proportional cut rather than laid off en masse to increase shareholder dividends.

We have to bring focus away from the consumers and towards the people who make it all possible. The games industry is a well-oiled machine, and if it doesn’t spit you out it’ll swallow you whole.