

By the nature of Device 6, almost none of its actions are nondiegetic. Now, I know this is a bold claim, but please hear me out. Device 6 is sparse on mechanics, so players have few options for how to interact with the game. There are no actions a player can take that do not impact the narrative. Scrolling, buying the doll, solving puzzles—these all contribute to the user's personal narrative as a phase 1 initiate. Even the periodic deliverance of 100 points serves as a red herring to push the user further into the process, eventually even facilitating the doll purchase. One can even argue that the surveys play a central role in developing the player's personal narrative, as they call the user to question their experience, their subjectivity, even their sanity. Under these terms, they're more likely to submit to HAT and become a believer, fully integrated into the same technology cult that kills Anna. From a mechanical standpoint, every operator action impacts the player, who *is* a part of the story. There's no pause button, no menu, nothing to weaken the connection between player and device. If a user wants to stop the story, they cannot leverage existing operator actions to do so—they have to stop playing. If they're playing the game, no matter in what capacity, they're developing the story of Device 6. There is no alternative. Either throw away your phone or experience diegesis.

I was so excited that aesthetic style was brought into the process of creating our bitsy game. Aesthetics can do so much to establish theme, tone, and genre. It separates spaces and, when done well, makes for good level design and strong storytelling. After all, we interpret games primarily through sight, through the visuals painted before us on screen.

Although it may seem to be an odd example, I think Balatro demonstrates this quite well. The psychedelic visuals entice users to the premise of alternate-reality poker. Without the aesthetic style, the game simply doesn't read as well and is not nearly as fun or immersive.

I admit I'm having trouble working through the mechanics of bitsy, but I'm incredibly excited to continue playing with the tools of aesthetics.