Meat Cogito

A Narrative Horror Game

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Design Document

- High Level Concept/Design

- Product Design

- Detailed & Game Systems Design

Game Design

Working Title

Meat Cogito

Plays off the quote *"Cogito, ergo sum"* (Translates to *"I Think, Therefore I am"* - Rene Descartes)
Meat refers to the being (aka the player), and Cogito derives from the philosophy of a being establishing it exists through its thinking/awareness.

Concept statement

Meat Cogito is a narrative horror game where the player, a being of pure thought, transforms based on their perception of humanity, questioning identity, existence, and reality itself—will they become human, a monster, or break free from the illusion?

Genre(s)

Meat Cogito is a narrative body horror game blending psychological, surreal, and philosophical horror.

Target audience

The target audience for Meat Cogito consists of players who enjoy **narrative-driven horror experiences** with surreal, psychological, and philosophical themes. This includes fans of experimental horror games such as Mouthwashing and How a Fish is Made.
It also appeals to those who enjoy literature and philosophy, especially themes related to **René Descartes, consciousness, and identity**.

Unique Selling Points

- **Transformation-Based Gameplay** – The player starts as a brain and gradually constructs their body based on their perception of humanity, leading to different possible forms and outcomes.
- **Philosophical Horror Rooted in Descartes' Ideology** – The game explores the nature of existence through the lens of Cogito, ergo sum, making players question what it means to be human.
- **Surreal and Psychological Horror** – Inspired by Wrong Organ games, the unsettling atmosphere blends **dreamlike visuals, abstract logic, and existential dread** to create a unique horror experience

Player Experience and Game POV

Who is the player?
- The player begins as a disembodied brain- a fragmented consciousness. As you progress through the story you construct your own form based on the evolving perception of what it means to be human.

Fantasy
- The game grants the player the ability to define their own humanity, what will you become or will you break free?

Emotions
- The player should feel existential dread, self-awareness, and unease.

Engagement
- Mystery surrounding their existence, and the world's surreality
- Transformation surrounding the narrative choices.

Visual and Audio Style

Look and feel
- Surreal body horror, abstract spaces, with an art style reminiscent of Mouthwashing & Puppet Combo games.
- The world shifts between flesh and void, mirroring the players evolving form and perception.

Audio Style
- Distorted sounds, uncanny human-like sounds, and minimalist yet unsettling music.

Game World Fiction

Themes:
- Descartes' philosophy (Cogito, ergo sum).
- Identity, transformation, and self-awareness.
- The horror of being and the fear of nothingness.

Player-Relevant Narrative:
- The world reacts to their choices and physical changes.
- Their form dictates their perception—are they in a body, a nightmare, or a simulation?
- They must choose: **accept their existence, become something monstrous, or escape entirely.**

Core Loops

Perception & Choice – The player makes choices about what "human" means.
Transformation & Adaptation – Their body shifts based on these choices.
Exploration & Discovery – The world reacts to their form and perception.
Narrative Progression – They uncover clues about their reality.
Engagement: Players are drawn in by the mystery of their form and the world's shifting nature.
Emergent Results:
- Different players will experience **unique transformations and endings.**
- Some will become monstrous, others will remain disembodied, and some may "awaken" from the simulation

Objectives and Progression

Short-Term Goals:
- Assemble a body through choices and interactions.
- Explore and understand the world.

Long-Term Goals:
- Uncover the truth—what is real?
- Decide their fate—remain, transcend, or escape.

Progression System:
- **Choice-based evolution**—the player's body changes based on their perception of "self."
- **Narrative branches**—the world reacts differently based on their form.

Game Systems

Internal Systems:
- Simulation system tracking **player thoughts, choices, and body changes.**
- Reality distortion mechanics—**the world subtly warps based on the player's perception.**

Player-Interacting Systems:
- Transformation system—**the body evolves through interactions.**
- Dialogue & introspection system—**player thoughts shape their reality.**
- Environmental storytelling—**clues hidden in the world rather than direct exposition.**

Interactivity

Moment-by-Moment Gameplay:
- Player moves through **shifting, eerie environments.**
- Makes **decisions that alter their body and perspective.**
- Encounters entities that may be **fragments of their consciousness** or **illusions.**

Player Movement:
- **Exploration-focused** (walking, interacting, examining objects).
- Some areas may be **locked behind certain transformations.**

Physics/Mechanics:
- **Body changes affect movement and perception.**
- Example: A **monstrous form may cause NPCs to react differently.**

Storyboard

- Concept Drawings

- Scene Direction

- Sound / Atmosphere Notes

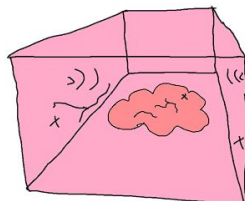# Meat Cogito

1.

🎬 Action
Darkness fades into a pulsating, organic void. The protagonist, a writhing mass of flesh, twitches and stirs. Walls breathe rhythmically, veins pulsing like a heartbeat.

🔊 Voiceover/Sound Notes
Wet, organic squelching. A distorted voice whispers: 'You must become. But what will you be?'

✏️ Notes
Introduction to the surreal environment

2.

🎬 Action
A winding passage made of muscle and sinew, shifting subtly with each step. The floor feels unstable, occasionally twitching as if it's alive.

🔊 Voiceover/Sound Notes
Distant, wet scraping sounds. An unseen presence murmurs Descartes-inspired riddles: 'What is the shape of truth?' 'Do you exist, or do you merely perceive?'

✏️ Notes
Player's body starts changing with choices The player navigates through a surreal corridor.
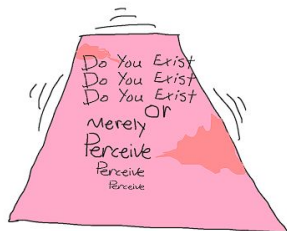

3.

🎬 Action
NPCs are grotesque, half-formed figures—faces missing, limbs fused together, whispering. One figure is a pile of hands that move like a mouth when speaking. Another has too many eyes, each blinking asynchronously.

🔊 Voiceover/Sound Notes
Whispers overlapping, some mocking, some pleading. One figure says: 'If I think, am I?' Another screams: 'I thought too much and became this!'

✏️ Notes
Interaction with NPCs influences transformation
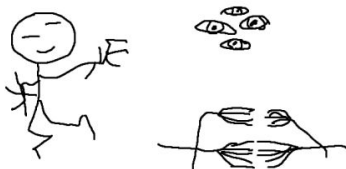
4.

🎬 Action
The environment starts dissolving into abstract shapes. The walls pulse erratically, breaking apart into floating chunks of meat. A massive, veiny eye watches from above, unblinking

🔊 Voiceover/Sound Notes
A droning hum grows louder, mixed with unintelligible whispers. The voice from the beginning returns: 'You are almost complete.'

✏️ Notes
Final choice impacts the ending Reality begins to collapse around the player.

Meat - Referring to the **Body**

Cogito - Referring to the **Mind**

What is human, and what is real?

Issue

A Narrative Document was a bad approach.

1. Text-heavy and difficult to make with time constraints.
2. Unable to iterate and test ideas.

Storyboards are the solution!

1. Visual representation
2. Transition between scenes
3. Visual sequences, allowed for control flow

Week1: Pre-Production

~~Research~~
~~Finalize game concept~~
~~Design document~~

Week 2: Narrative

~~Create & finalize
narrative~~

Week 3-4: Prototype Development

Build movement and interaction mechanics
Implement placeholder assets
Develop core horror mechanics

Week 5-10: Asset Creation and Refinement

Design environments
Design characters
Design UI elements
Implement sound design & music
Refine animations & visual effects

Week 11: Playtesting & Iteration

Conduct playtesting
Gather feedback
Bug fixing