

= Cloud ( video game ) =

Cloud is a 2005 indie puzzle video game developed by a team of students in the University of Southern California 's ( USC ) Interactive Media Program . The team began development of Cloud in January 2005 with a US \$ 20 @, @ 000 grant from the USC ; the game was released as a free download that October . By July 2006 , the hosting website had received 6 million visits , and the game had been downloaded 600 @, @ 000 times .

The game centers on a boy who dreams of flying while asleep in a hospital bed . The concept was partially based on lead designer Jenova Chen 's childhood ; he was often hospitalized for asthma and would daydream while alone in his room . Assuming the role of the boy , the player flies through a dream world and manipulates clouds to solve puzzles . The game was intended to spark emotions in the player that the video game industry usually ignored .

Cloud won the Best Student Philosophy award at the 2006 Slamdance Guerilla Games Competition , and a Student Showcase award at the 2006 Independent Games Festival . The game was well received by critics , who cited its visuals , music , and relaxing atmosphere as high points . Chen and producer Kellee Santiago went on to co @-@ found the studio Thatgamecompany , which has considered remaking Cloud as a commercial video game .

= = Gameplay = =

Cloud , a single @-@ player video game for Microsoft Windows , centers on a boy who dreams of flying through the sky while asleep in a hospital bed . The player assumes control of the sleeping boy 's avatar ? the projection of the boy into his dream world ? and guides him through his dream of a small group of islands with a light gathering of clouds . The avatar 's direction and speed are controlled with a mouse ; movement is generally on a horizontal plane , but vertical flight can be attained by holding down the third button of the mouse . The player may interact with clouds only while flying horizontally .

The game contains three types of clouds : white clouds , which follow the avatar ; gray , neutral clouds , which become white when touched ; and black clouds , which may be combined with white clouds to cause rain , dissolving both clouds . A large number of white clouds more easily dissolves a small number of dark clouds than an equal number , and vice versa . White clouds stop following the avatar if the player moves too quickly and they resume following if approached again . Each of the four missions in Cloud has a different objective , including forming patterns in the sky with clouds , eliminating black clouds , and creating rain over each of the islands .

= = Development = =

Cloud was designed and released in 2005 by a team of seven students in the Interactive Media master 's degree program at the USC School of Cinematic Arts . The game was not made for a specific class . Development began in January 2005 and the game was released in late October , receiving its final update in December . The group was headed by Jenova Chen and included Stephen Dinehart , Erik Nelson , Aaron Meyers , Glenn Song , composer Vincent Diamante , and producer Kellee Santiago . The game won the 2005 Game Innovation Grant of \$ 20 @, @ 000 from the USC , which is intended to support the production of experimental games . The idea for the game was partially based on Chen 's childhood experience , as he was often hospitalized for asthma and would daydream while waiting for the doctors .

According to Chen , Cloud was designed to " expand the spectrum of emotions video games evoke . " Chen had the first idea for the game ; while walking to school one day he looked up at the sky , noticing the difference between the fluffy clouds there and the " polluted and gray " clouds of Shanghai where he was born , and thought about making a game about clouds . It was given a story to " create the premise and help player to be emotionally invested " ; however , the team avoided making the story too strong , as it would " distract the player from the core experience " of flying freely and shaping clouds . In the early stages of development , the game had an involved backstory

about an alien who attempts to clean up the environment , but this was cut down to " a simple ' poetic ' introduction to the cloud child trapped in a hospital bed . " The team intended Cloud to " communicate a feeling of youthfulness , freedom , and the wonder of imagination . " It was built on a modified version of a game engine developed by several team members for their previous game , Dyadin . At the 2006 Game Developers Conference student showcase , Chen and Santiago pitched Cloud to Sony representative John Hight as the first game in the " Zen " genre . Hight was interested , but Sony declined to publish the game .

= = Reception and legacy = =

Cloud won the Best Student Philosophy award for artistic achievement at the Slamdance Guerrilla Games Competition and a Student Showcase award at the Independent Games Festival . It was showcased on Spike TV , G4TV , and CBS Sunday . The game immediately received a great deal of attention when it was released ; site traffic overran the server they were hosting the website on , and then crashed those of the school . By February 2006 , just over three months after its release , the website had been viewed over one million times and the game downloaded over 300 @, @ 000 times . By July 2006 , it had reached six million visits and 600 @, @ 000 downloads .

The game received positive reviews from critics . Joel Durham , Jr. of GameSpy claimed that " everything about Cloud is simply jaw @-@ dropping " , and cited its music , visuals , and sensation of flying as high points . William Usher of Game Tunnel also praised the visuals and audio ; he believed that its graphics created a relaxing atmosphere , and that the " touching musical score " would emotionally move any player . A reviewer for Game Informer said that the game pointed " to a bright future " in which games would inspire a wider range of emotions ; however , the writer called Cloud more of an " experience " than a game . Ron White of PC World similarly called it " the most relaxing experience I 've ever had that involved a computer " . Durham concluded that Cloud " would set your mind free " .

Chen and Santiago went on to co @-@ found the video game studio Thatgamecompany . Composer Vincent Diamante and Erik Nelson worked for the company on its second game , Flower . Thatgamecompany has considered remaking Cloud as a commercial video game , but has decided to do so only if the staff cannot conceive any other game ideas .