

= Monument Valley (video game) =

Monument Valley is a puzzle game developed and published by indie studio Ustwo . The player leads the princess Ida through mazes of optical illusions and impossible objects while manipulating the world around her to reach various platforms . Monument Valley was developed over ten months beginning in early 2013 based on concept drawings by company artist Ken Wong . Its visual style was inspired by Japanese prints , minimalist sculpture , and indie games Windosill , Fez , and Sword & Sworcery , and was compared by critics to M. C. Escher drawings and Echochrome . The art was designed such that each frame would be worthy of public display . After a closed beta test , it was released for iOS on April 3 , 2014 , and was later ported to Android and Windows Phone . The game received generally favorable reviews . Critics praised its art and sound design , but noted its lack of difficulty and short length . It won a 2014 Apple Design Award , was named Apple 's best iPad game of 2014 , and sold over two million copies by January 2015 ; by May 2016 , sales of the game exceeded 26 million .

= = Gameplay = =

In Monument Valley , player @-@ character princess Ida journeys through mazes of optical illusions and impossible objects , which are referred to as " sacred geometry " in @-@ game , as she journeys to be forgiven for something . The game is presented in isometric view , and the player interacts with the environment to find hidden passages as Ida progresses to the map 's exit . Each of the ten levels has a different central mechanic . Interactions include moving platforms and pillars , and creating bridges . The player is indirectly cued through the game by design elements like color , and directly cued by crow people , who block Ida 's path . Critics compared the game 's visual style to a vibrant M. C. Escher drawing and Echochrome . The game includes a camera mode where the player can roam the level to compose screenshots . It includes filters similar to those of Instagram .

= = Development = =

Monument Valley was developed by Ustwo , a digital design firm founded in 2004 that has produced iPhone apps since 2007 . Their Whale Trail game received millions of downloads , and their other apps include design app Ganimator and photo sharing app Rando . Monument Valley was conceived as a touch game for tablets . Its development began in the beginning of 2013 , and lasted 10 months . It began with a piece of concept art drawn in the style of M. C. Escher , and the final design did not deviate far from this original . Ustwo management did not give the development team a timeline or budget , and instead told them to focus on " making a high @-@ quality product " . Games development is not a large portion of Ustwo 's revenue , so the company focuses its games development on producing " great products " that reflect well on the company , rather than highly profitable apps .

Of the art style , game designer and artist Ken Wong said he aspired to make each frame of the gameplay worthy of public display . The project began as Wong 's concept drawings before it became a game project . The visual style was inspired by Japanese prints , minimalist sculpture , and indie games Windosill , Fez , and Superbrothers : Sword & Sworcery EP . Wong added that the gameplay was designed to let the player find the object of the game through exploration , without direct guidance . The game uses colors to signify where the player can interact , similar to Mirror 's Edge . Wong compared the gameplay experience to a cross between the wonder of a toy shop and the world of The Lion , the Witch , and the Wardrobe , and its story to a symbolic " song " rather than a narrative book . The game was designed to be completed by most players , a style uncommon for games designed for popular audiences . It was intended to be a " premium experience " rather than a difficult challenge .

The game was in beta as of December 2013 , where it had over 1 @, @ 000 testers and the average finish time was 90 minutes . It was planned as an iPad exclusive . The game was initially released for iOS on April 3 , 2014 , and the company recouped their cost of development within the

first two weeks of release . An Android port went through two beta tests and was later released on May 14 , 2014 . More levels were in development , as of April 2014 . Ustwo said they were adding the levels for " artistic reasons " , such as ideas they wanted to try but could not fit into the original release . Wong stated that , with consumer interest , the company would consider porting the game to other platforms . The game 's technical director said that the game was " not very difficult to port " since it was written in the Unity game engine . But as the game was built with a portrait (vertical) screen orientation in mind , the developer had difficulty converting the game for devices with landscape @-@ oriented (horizontal) screens , such as the YouTube trailer video format and the PlayStation Vita .

An add @-@ on expansion , entitled *Forgotten Shores* , was released for iOS devices on November 12 , 2014 , on the Appstore on November 20 , 2014 and on Google Play Store on November 24 , 2014 . This adds eight additional levels to the ten in the original game . A Windows Phone port was released on April 30 , 2015 .

The game 's soundtrack features music by Stafford Bawler , Obfusc , and Grigori . A limited edition vinyl two @-@ volume recording is set to be released by Ustwo and iam8bit sometime in the second quarter of 2016 , and will include the music from the main game and its two expansions .

= = Reception = =

The game received " generally favorable " reviews , according to video game review score aggregator Metacritic . It immediately went to the top of the App Store paid apps chart , where it stayed for at least a month based on strong reviews and word of mouth . It was chosen as an App Store Editor 's Choice and later both received a 2014 Apple Design Award and was named Apple 's best iPad game of 2014 . Pocket Gamer gave the game their gold award , and their Harry Slater wrote that there was " nothing else like *Monument Valley* on the App Store " .

Multiple reviewers cited the art and sound design as exceptional . Edge added that the sound design 's addition of " deep rumbles " and environmental " clicks " gave the game the feeling of *Tomb Raider* 's moving " ancient mechanisms " . TouchArcade 's Shaun Musgrave called the visuals " almost impossibly gorgeous " , and Wired wrote that the game " might be the most beautiful iPad game of 2014 " . Creative Review called the game 's puzzles " clever " and appreciated the developers ' attention to detail .

While Polygon 's Danielle Riendeau praised the puzzle design , other critics noted its lack of difficulty and short length . Riendeau wrote that the puzzles solutions always felt intuitive and never felt frustrating . She found " everything " about the game to be " soothing , almost hypnotic " . Edge thought that the game did not present a " genuine " challenge , and that the puzzles did not " find fresh ways to confound and delight " until the final levels . The magazine compared the game to " assembling flat @-@ pack furniture " : straightforward in its process , but rewarding in its transformation . Harry Slater of Pocket Gamer wrote that the game was " almost breathtakingly unique " . Riendeau said she finished the game in under three hours , and TouchArcade 's Shaun Musgrave , who could not " even begin to imagine anyone getting stuck on ... the puzzles " , put the game 's length at " an hour and change " . Jeff Marchiafava of Game Informer wanted more content . He was also unsatisfied with the game 's narrative , which he found " obtuse " and " vague " to a fault . Musgrave of TouchArcade thought that while games that focus on experiences can be shorter , *Monument Valley* did not last long enough " for the mechanics to reach their full potential " , though the time was " just about right " for the story .

Monument Valley sold 500 @, @ 000 copies in a month , and one million copies in three months . In November 2014 , the game had sold 1 @. @ 4 million copies and by January 2015 , the game had sold 2 @. @ 4 million copies . In January 2015 , Ustwo noted that the game had seen a large amount of software piracy , with 95 % of the installs on Android and 60 % on iOS devices coming from unpaid copies ; the company asserted some of these may include users installing on multiple devices but believe the majority was though users that had not purchased the title . While these numbers were discouraging , the company asserted it will continue to develop premium titles for mobile devices . Despite the piracy , Ustwo stated they have exceeded \$ 6 million in revenue from

sales of the game as of mid @-@ January 2015 , exceeding the \$ 1 @.@ 4 million in development costs . By January 2016 , Ustwo reported that more than 24 million users have downloaded the game , the ten @-@ fold increase from 2015 partially due to legitimate giveaways of the game through Apple 's App Store , Google Play , and Amazon Underground . Of about seven million of the free downloads through Apple , about 35 % of them purchased the " Forgotten Shores " expansion . Ustwo reported total sales over \$ 14 million from 26 million copies by May 2016 .

The game was named as a finalist for Innovation Award , Best Visual Art , and Best Handhold / Mobile Game for the 2015 Game Developers Choice Awards , and was an honorable mention for Best Design . The game was also named a finalist for Outstanding Achievement in Art Direction , Outstanding Achievement in Game Direction , Outstanding Innovation in Gaming , Mobile Game of the Year , and the D.I.C.E. Spirit Award for the 18th Annual D.I.C.E. Awards by the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences . The title won the BAFTA Video Game Awards for best " British Game " and " Mobile / Handheld Game " , while nominated for " Best Game " , " Artistic Achievement " , and " Original Property " awards . Time magazine placed the game on their best of list while being Game Informer 's " Editor 's Choice " for " Best Mobile Exclusive " .

= = Legacy = =

The game was a " minor plot point " in the third season of House of Cards , in which Frank Underwood plays the game ; he is inspired by video gamer reviewer Thomas Yates 's elegant description of Monument Valley to bring the reviewer on as his biographer . According to the studio Ustwo , they were approached by Netflix about including the game in the story , and the studio readily agreed without any financial compensation . They made a specialized version of the game for the show to aid in filming and to meet a description of the game provided within the script for the first episode in which it appeared . Ustwo saw the opportunity to introduce the title to a different audience set , and have already seen an increase in sales as a result of this appearance . The game re @-@ entered the top of the most download app charts on the major app stores a few days after the February 2015 release of the season on Netflix . Monument Valley characters were added to the cast of Crossed Roads in late 2015 . Jaz Rignall (USgamer) noted that the 2015 Lara Croft Go appeared to have been influenced by Monument Valley .