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Rapid Idea Prototyping for Games

Midterm Project Notes

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Challenge: Make an analog game from a digital game.

Inspiration Game: The Marriage

Link to game: http://www.rodvik.com/rodgames/marriage.html

Core Mechanics and Values of The Marriage:

* Balance resources between two entities- some resources that cause one square to benefit will be detrimental to the other square
* Single input: mouse over objects to interact- any other input will cause the game to restart because it is “fragile”
* No instructions. Players must actively look for the instructions under notes, and even then the only hint is that you can mouse over different game entities. A full description and interpretation can be found online where you download the game.
* Expression. The purpose of this game is art- to express a feeling about a certain concept using mechanics unique to games (as opposed to other media such as narrative, video, song)
* It’s about the concept of marriage, balancing between male and female aspects of a relationship
* The game plays itself sometimes

Mechanics to translate:

* Balance – my needs vs your needs
* Express a concept – a relationship?
* Be gentle
* No instructions – not really possible in an analog game without DM or other players, perhaps include instructions but only let certain players know certain things
* Two entities – two players?
* Outside elements that add or detract from those two entities – how do you control this without AI? Third player?

New Mechanics:

* Co-operative: expressing two people in a relationship using two people

Inspiration: hand game where you push and pull to try to get the other player to move, changing from competitive to cooperative/expressive

Ideas:

* ~~move something from one place to another~~ no because that’s not what the original game’s about
* no talking – because the game comes without instructions
* players have separate objectives – because blue and pink have separate needs
* ??players must keep fingertips touching no matter what – maintaining the relationship, if you stop touching the relationship breaks as in the original game
* ~~??Use paper because it is fragile~~
* -> Don’t move your feet – again like keeping fingertips touching
* ~~players must face back to back?~~

Concept 1:

~~Two players start toe-to-toe, facing each other, with only their fingertips touching. Each player must turn around, without breaking the connection between their fingers or feet. Players may turn around independently of each other, or at the same time. The game ends when each player has turned around full circle.~~ Not physically possible.

**Concept 2: (Playtest in class)**

To start, stand facing each other, feet together, an arm’s length apart. (Be sure to use the arm length of the person with shorter arms to measure.) Place your hands together, palm to palm.

You may not grab the other person’s hand – you can only touch, push, and release. Be gentle.

If you move your feet, the game is over.

Players have separate goals such as extending both hands, leaning forward, or removing one hand while the other player is leaning on it. The goals are written on a deck of index cards. Shuffle the goals and deal half to each player. Goals cards are laid out on a table behind the other player so they cannot see what your goals are.

Try to accomplish all your goals by moving your hands and the other player’s hands into the appropriate positions. Players will be simultaneously trying to accomplish their own goals.

One player losing balance represents one square becoming smaller or transparent – the other player must sacrifice their balance to save them.

Experiments:

* Same as concept 2, with new rule: players must lean into each other at all times. Makes keeping balance more difficult.
* Players make up own goals?
* Roll dice for goals?
* Computer-generated goals? Can I do this for an analog project?

**Concept 3: (Second in-class playtest)**

Same as concept 2, except players now stand about 1.5 arm lengths apart (the further, the more difficult. Also, they always lean in towards each other, so they depend upon the other person for balance.

Added computer generated goals. Instead of goals cards, each player now gets a digital display set up behind the other player which displays their goals. Should keep the game going longer.

Added atmospheric music, to get people in the mood for some abstract expressive gaming.

Link: youarelistening.to/boston

New mechanic: life. Each player starts with an amount of life, let’s try 5 for playtesting. Players say their life out loud when they begin playing and whenever their life count changes. This is the only time players are allowed to talk. Life count changes in one of two cases: completing a goal or failing to complete a goal. Players complete a goal when they do what the goal says before it disappears from the screen. Players fail a goal when it disappears before they can do it. Completing a goal increases life by 1, failing a goal decreases life by one.

If either player reaches zero, the game is over.

Hopefully this will create a new dynamic of players allowing each other to complete goals based on who needs more life, the way a player would decide which square to assist in the Marriage.

**Concept 4: (final in-class playtesting)**

Same as concept 3, with the following changes:

Specific setup for how far apart players should stand: Both players hold out their arms, hands flat, parallel to the ground. Stand just far enough apart that your fingers do not touch. Now make your hands perpendicular to the ground, and place your palms together with the other players’ palms. You should have to lean forward towards the other player in order to do this.

Added multi-goals to goal generation (i.e. a command for the left hand and a command for the right hand at the same time)

Reduced timer for changing goals, should make the game harder and more engaging.

Added animation to goal text- now it fades out relative to the amount of time the player has left to complete it. Makes it easier for a player to tell when their goal has changed, makes it more important that the player always pay attention because goal quickly becomes harder to read.

Settled on a single animated background for both players- didn’t seem important that they were looking at different pictures. Want players to feel more connected, so have them listen to the same music and see similar pictures. -> could experiment with this on a future iteration, having one player see/hear stressful input while the other is exposed to calming input

Removed lives, since players didn’t keep track of them.

Players are now meant to judge how well they do based on how long they can play without failing (e.g. failing to complete a goal, or moving their feet, or talking). No timer is necessary- just a sense of how often a team of players fails.

Final List of Goal Keywords and Meanings:

To make a goal, pick a modifier, a command, and a hand, then string them all together. For example, “Fast Extend Left” or “Spread Both”. You can also make a goal with commands for left and right hands, as in “Fast Lower Left, Raise Right”.

* Modifiers:
  + Fast – do this goal as fast as you can
  + (no Modifier)
* Commands:
  + Extend – extend your arm as far as you can
  + Retract – pull back your arm as far as you can
  + Raise – raise your arm as high as you can
  + Lower – lower your arm as low as you can
  + Spread – spread your arm out to the side, away from your body, as far as you can
  + Release – take your palm off of the other player’s palm
* Hands:
  + Left
  + Right
  + Both