

Project 1: Artist Statement

“Final Battle” is a project that examines the preconceptions of virtual interactions constructed by current video games. It assumes the player is experienced with video games, and presents them with the ability to move, attack, and talk with a green-colored character. Then, they inevitably meet a red-colored character. “Final Battle” revolves around the player’s preconceptions about the current video game scene. Given no further instruction, what actions do they take?

The action that the player must not take, if they want to reach a victory condition, is to attack. Instead, the player must dodge and repeatedly attempt to talk to the other character. However, my assumption as the creator of this project, is that the immediate reaction of any experienced video game player is to attack. I would like to explore this preconception of virtual interactions: in video games where attacking is an option, violence is almost always the key to victory.

Sherry Turkle describes that playing a game involves, “a process of deciphering the logic of the game, of understanding the intent of the game’s designer” (Turkle, 502). This process starts when the game begins, and continues until the game ends. When a player interacts for the first time with a new game, they have no information to “decipher the logic of the game”, and therefore must make assumptions off of previous experience. Most likely, the player will interpret defeating the enemy as the win condition.

Therefore, I believe that the “ability to attack” in a game holds meaning. As described by Daniel Chandler, this ability is the *signifier* while “winning” is the *signified*. While the “ability to attack” is not a tangible form of communication or appearance, it is capable of representing the concept of victory. This is possible through the rules of a game, and the preconceptions of meanings that experienced video gamers have.

My project revolves around contradicting this paradigm of victory through violence. In Anne-Marie Schleiner’s work, she states that hacking has “the possibility for not only modification and subversion but radical mutation into new gaming hybrids and genres.” Instead of hacking a specific game to create meaning, I would like to create a game to hack a genre. “Final Battle” is mostly inspired by “The Legend of Zelda”, an incredibly influential series of action role-playing games. The original titles feature similar 2D, top-down player controls, and the core gameplay revolves around defeating monsters. However, in “Final Battle”, it is not possible to defeat the red-colored character, no matter how hard the player tries.

A very similar piece is “/hug” in World of Warcraft, where the typical virtual social construction of Alliance versus Horde was contradicted. “Final Battle” is intended to parallel this contradiction, but focused on the game genre as a whole. When a dialogue begins between the two characters in “Final Battle”, more information about both characters are revealed. As it turns out, the characters don’t need to fight to resolve their issues!

Acknowledgements

1. Mekire's PyGame template was immensely helpful in setting up the menu and state transitions. The code can be found on this GitHub:
<https://github.com/Mekire/pygame-mutiscene-template-with-movie>
2. KidsCanCode's Tilemap game tutorial was crucial in helping me setup movement, camera, tiling, bullets, almost everything! The code can be found on this GitHub:
https://github.com/kidscancode/pygame_tutorials/tree/master/tilemap
3. "Whispers of Avalon" on OpenGameArt.org is used for the tilemap in this game. As you can see, it's a lot better than my pixel art (the two boxes and two attack arts). The tiles can be found here:
<https://opengameart.org/content/whispers-of-avalon-content>. The map itself is made with Tiled, and is original!

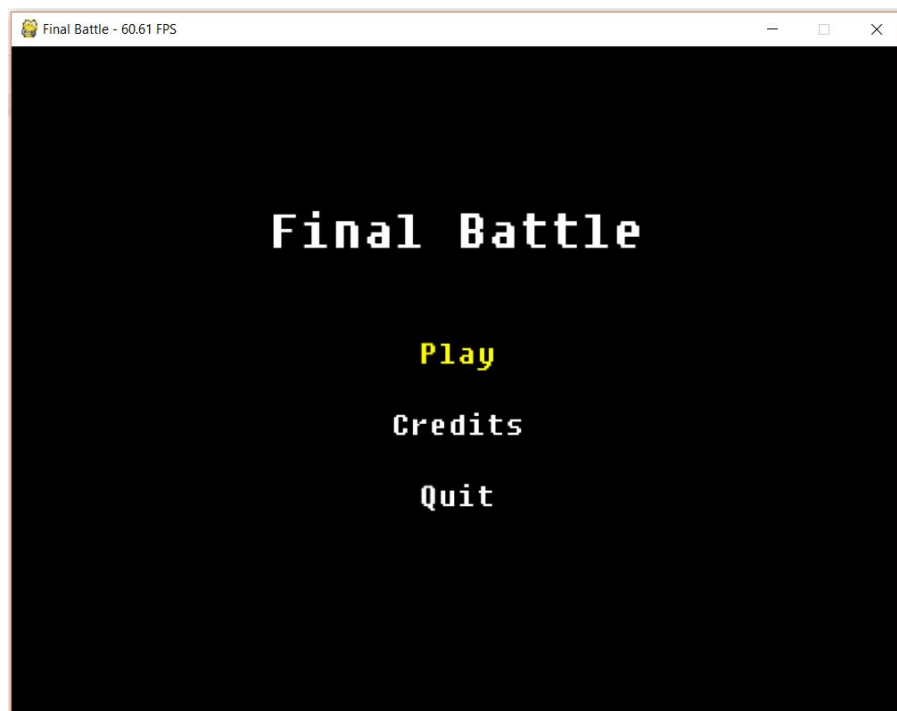
References

1. Sherry Turkle, "Video Games and Computer Holding Power" (1984)
2. Anne-Marie Schleiner, "Parasitic Inventions: Game patches and Hacker Art" (1999)
3. Daniel Chandler, "Semiotics for Beginners" (2001)
4. The Third Faction in "World of Warcraft", "/hug" (2010)

Screenshots



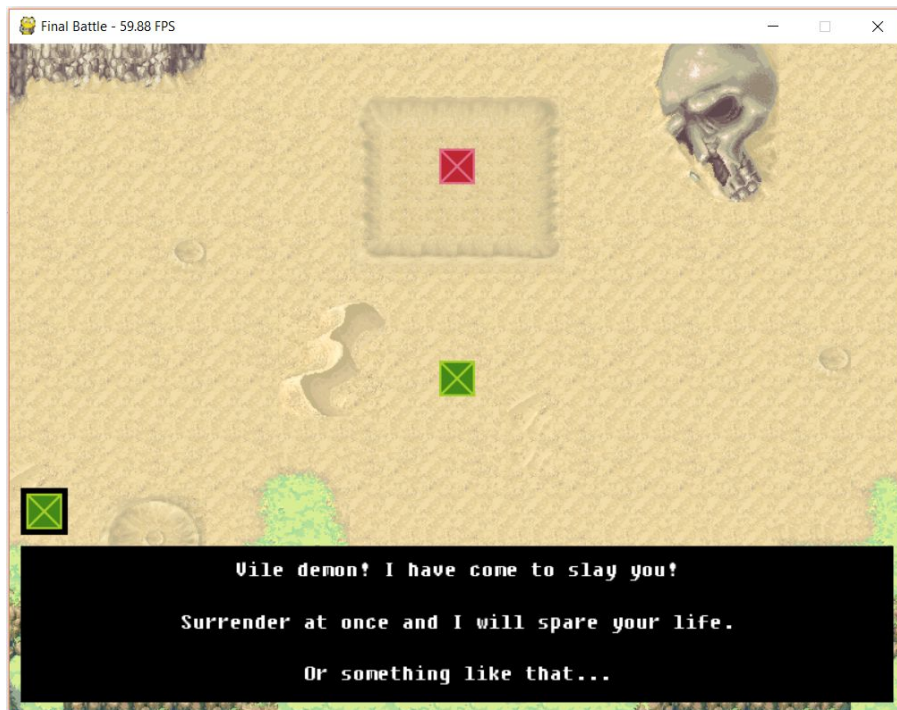
The splash/loading screen.



The main menu.



The only instructions given.



The two sides meet!



Both sides are capable of attacking.



With enough work from the player, a dialogue can begin!