

IML 400: Final Project—Ideation Document

Aesthetic:

Combination of Cyberpunk, Outrun and Vaporwave

Color palette: green + purple; gritty with neon hues; minimalist composition w/ 2D geometry (silhouettes superimposed in 3D space.) Surrealist, psychedelic overtones

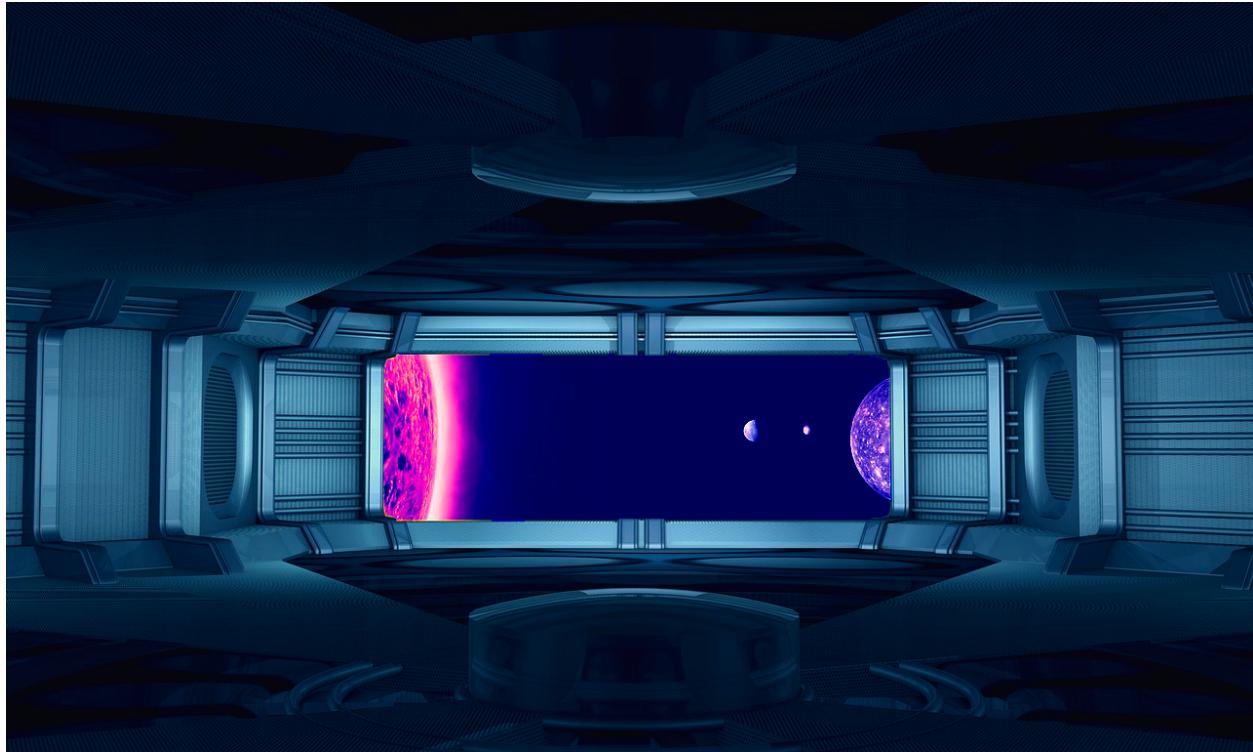
Mockups—

Without text:

(Interior of spaceship)

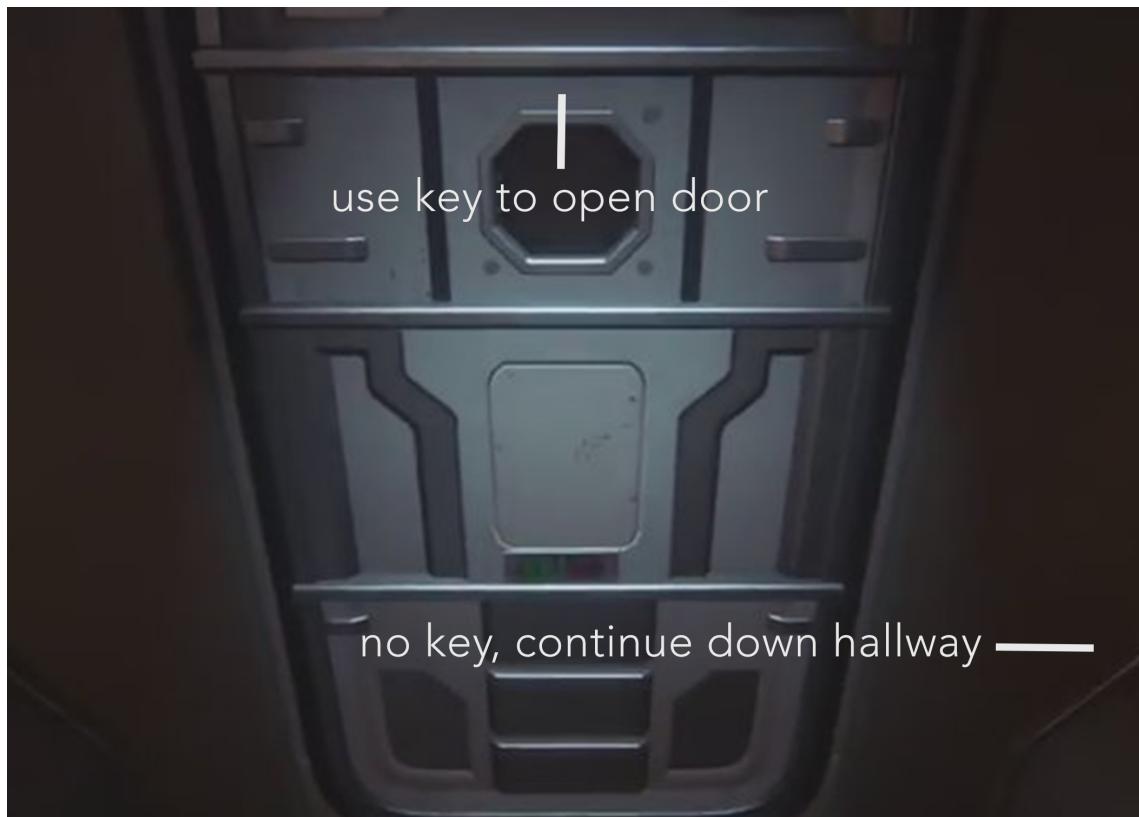




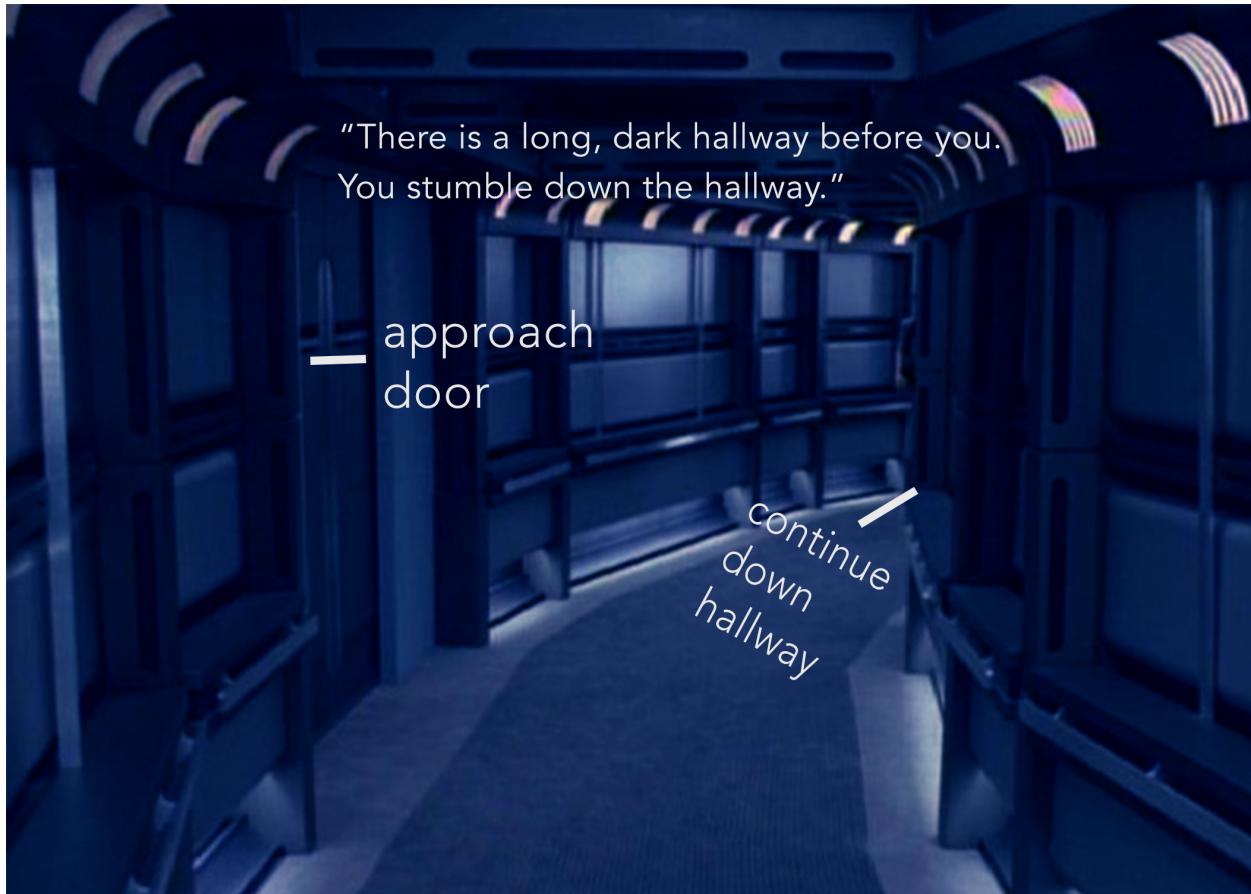




With Textual Supplements:







Gameplay/Technical Aspects:

Character navigates through 3-D spaces in POV mode. Unsure of specifics, but 3-D spaces, if possible, will be modeled in external VFX/game-design programs like Unity and Maya; if not, 3-D spaces will be created entirely through platforms like three.js + aframe

Interactivity (and the development of the narrative) hinges upon textual supplements/pop-ups which allow you to choose your journey. Text coincides with voice-overs

Other features: immersive sound-design + lighting + a screenplay issued orally (and with subtitles as an option)

Narrative:

Introductory Passage (to be issued at the beginning of the story):

Very nearly driven to extinction by a divine force known as X, Humanity has been living under the surface of Europa for 500 years. There are several small pockets of human life spread throughout Europa's vast oceans, clinging to the icy shelf (where the water was relatively warm and low in salinity) like moths upon a flame, each separated by hundreds of miles of uncharted, unnavigable and tempestuous liquid-darkness. These humans, now 20th generation ocean-dwellers, have been living under the ice for so long that they no longer have any remaining written records on previous cultures, technological inventions and human history in general — there had been no time for their ancestors (the first generation of ocean-dwellers; and the last generation of surface dwellers) to bring books or music or technology with them before fleeing underground from extinction. And thus, over time, all of humanity's previous accomplishments, great artistic works, all of it — all of humanity's culture and history and glorious progress began to slowly fade from one generation to the next until the only remnants of the past were a handful of illegible, well-worn religious texts (that could not be read as people had lost that ability as well), several textbooks on the workings of nuclear fusion reactors, and, most significantly, the Sun itself—that great source of luminance that hovered high in the frozen rafters of the cave, melting away shadow and fear alike, powering the village's water and food supply systems and fueling humanity's last glimmers of hope, pride and willpower. That Sun (which in reality was a nuclear fusion reactor constructed by the first ocean-dwellers) became the last remaining remnant of humanity's past technological advancements (that and the dilapidated, barely functioning desalination plants that also drew power from the Sun).

This village, in particular, had been extremely lucky in that its ancestral founders had been prudent enough to bring nuclear fusion technology along with them. Other villages had not been so fortunate, and, most likely, the vast majority of early ocean-dwellers had starved (or frozen) to death long ago. There was no shame in their deaths, though; in fact, it was an extreme statistical anomaly that any humans had survived below the surface for more than a handful of months in the first place. For, below Europa's icy shelf, in that vast ocean of frozen darkness, there exists neither food, nor potable water, nor light, nor any natural resources at all within reach of mankind—who no longer possessed the technology to explore beyond their settlements. This particular village, however, had been settled by extremely intelligent and tenacious surface-dwellers, who had made it a priority to install the artificial sun and desalination systems as quickly as possible and in such a manner that they could run, without any need for serious adjustments, for up to half a millennium. These ancestral settlers had also been extremely prudent (or perhaps lucky) in that they had chosen to construct their settlement (—which was nothing more than an icy orb reinforced by a thin metal shell

and buoyed by tethers drilled into the icy shelf above—) only several hundred meters below the surface. For, in the oceans below the surface of this godforsaken, frozen moon where mankind had been forced to make its last stand, there was only a fraction of water that would have been warm and stable enough to allow for mankind to survive in such primitive shelters. This layer of (relatively) warm, stable, and pure water stretched for around 400 meters beneath the surface. Beneath that depth, the ocean became increasingly cold, unstable, and, according to the ocean-dweller's mythology, filled with hordes of monstrous alien aquatic lifeforms that could swallow their settlement whole. Indeed, the fluid dynamics of Europa's oceans will become extremely important to the survival of this particular village quite soon, yet we shall leave that for later.

Initially, in the first century of this particular village's existence, information had been spread from the first generation of ocean-dwellers to younger generations through the several written texts they had been able to salvage before retreating underground—yet they had lacked access to proper materials to educate these younger generations (on writing and reading and basic mathematical and scientific principles), and the handful of written works they had brought proved to be insufficient in passing along the vast amounts of knowledge they possessed. And soon, once the ancestral ocean-dwellers had all died, their information became spread by word-of-mouth only, decaying over decades of misinterpretation and shoddy attempts at translation. Within two centuries, all that was left of humanity's past, both spiritually and materialistically, was the Sun that floated above the village, nestled in the ceiling of that icy dark entrapment, pulsating slowly, bathing the villagers with the light of intelligence long-ago forgotten. And, logically—as humanity reverted to a primitive state in their tenebrous and ascetic existence—that singular, anachronistic source of illumination and power became the reason for life itself, a God worshipped by all—a monolithic embodiment of the past, whose true functioning and purpose had long ago been erased, now mankind's sole source of hope—a lone flame flickering in the frosty iron dark, wavering slightly, throwing lonely shadows of prostrated villagers across the cave's wall, gradually waning from generation to generation until, one day:

The Sun was extinguished; god died.

Thematic elements underlying narrative; the argument at the core of the piece:

Life's three greatest questions: **why are we here, how shall we organize ourselves, and what shall we do with our days?**

Postulation 1 (Why are we here?)

The universe is irrational. Our existence, at a primitive level, consists of the intake and reaction to (random) sensory data. We are programmed to calculate this data and react to it accordingly. The “best” machines survive this process and fulfill the purpose of their existence by creating new machines with similar attributes. This process of biological “progress” continues thusly until one of these sensory-intake-machines becomes more than a machine—self-aware, a being sophisticated enough to recognize the irrationality/meaninglessness of its existence. This being, in reaction to a world without meaning, does the only logical thing, and creates his own meaning...(thus beginning civilization)

Postulation 2 (How shall we organize ourselves?)

Although our existence is meaningless (reproduction withholding), we (sentient beings) give it meaning by constructing systems of ideals (based upon logical/emotional responses) to give it a false sense of structure/order (in order to make everyone smart enough to realize how meaningless existence is not kill themselves—and also to control and manipulate the sensory-intake-machines.) Given that we are egocentric and solitary, a hierarchy forms in this new “organized”, “ordered” world in which the meaning makers are Gods—through them flow culture and science and art and the truth. The sensory-intake-machines continue onwards as they did before, except, in this new and meaningful world, they are now meaning-intake-machines—their sole purpose being the consumption of culturally-constructed ideals/iconography/propaganda/etc...

Postulation 3 (What Shall We Do With Our Days?)

You either make meaning, or you consume it. If you are a meaning maker, then you create, if you are a meaning-intake-machine (i.e. fishy), then you consume. The only real way of rebelling against existence is death, there is no disrupting a system of made up ideals.

A narrative of disempowerment—hero is never told of his destiny, is never empowered, is brought into new worlds but always as a stranger

Redemption is found through the fabric of the world itself...universe/aesthetic reflects progression in “hero”/narrative. Redemption is found in the comprehension of a collective consciousness (think Solaris where he is absorbed into the sentient alien planet)

World:

Social Hierarchies:

Fishies:

purpose: to consume, toil, consume, toil, consume, toil, consume, toil (ad infinitum) (also die and reproduce of course)

The fishies are the unconscious sensory-intake-machines, the unintelligent masses who are too stupid to grasp life's meaningless, yet too well-programmed to die, and thus are easily manipulated (by the more intelligent beings—the ones who create the meaning itself; i.e. mermaids—)through culturally-constructed iconography and ideals (which, to the unintelligent masses, represent only more sensory data) to consume certain things/live a certain way/believe in this and that

Dolphins:

Disseminate meaning/iconography/ideals constructed by mermaids to the fishies... act as a mouthpiece to keep the plebs happy while they slowly work themselves to death
Our hero, arthur, is a dolphin

Mermaids:

The meaning maker, the source of truth, the being itself;

Constructs icons/ideas/etc which dolphins disseminate and fishes consume

More Abstract Elements Of The World/Universe:

There is a **digital world** and there is a **material world** (digital vs analog; order vs chaos; Apollonian vs Dionysian)

Within the digital world: there is the darknet and the brightnet..upper eschelon and lower eschelon (high and low culture)

Worlds within worlds within worlds; narrative contains layers within layers—main character descends/ascends through these layers as story unfolds, and the art style follows these themes

Character enters new reality and spirals downwards into a structured void...perhaps he enters this new reality by being plugged into the digital matrix

The physical world:

Is it a barren wasteland devoid of life? Do people take solace in the freedom/mystery/beauty of the digital world because their physical reality is devoid of beauty and mystery? Or is natural beauty abundant? Or both, is there a world in which the two exist side by side?

Is it a post-racial world? Is there conflict now between machines and humans? Or between digital beings and other digital beings? How are hierarchies enforced through several layers of existence?

Are the super rich totally immortal? Or perhaps only a handful of the uber rich—technology has made these few beings literal gods. They are worshipped through the consumption of media/ideas in the same way our religions work. They have the resources/access to immense computing power to upload their consciousness(es) digitally; perhaps, as the source/purveyors of the technology that underlies the digital world, they give themselves access to power/abilities that 99.9% of the population can't access; their iconography is everywhere in this digital world, their mythology spread through every available medium...)

Overarching Themes/Central Ideas:

Free-will vs Social Constructs—social constructs dominate, sap free-will, squash individuality; they promise order/structure but merely enslave.

Cultural Appropriation

Technology vs Politics—intersection/collision/conflict in ideology(direction of future)between technology and politics (i.e. technology tries to liberate while politics tries to manipulate and control)

Surveillance—EVERYTHING IS SEEN, EVERYTHING IS RECORDED

An Irrational World vs A Rational World—Analog vs Digital; Dionysian vs Apollonian; material existence vs digital existence; mankind's systems of meaning vs the chaotic void they attempt to compute; digital world is an extension of our attempt to create meaning (but also an extension of the systems of meaning that control/manipulate).

The essential conflict defining human nature: the instinct to rebel/destroy vs the instinct to submit/be controlled (thanatos vs eros). At the end of the day, the weak-minded WANT to be dominated; they don't know it, they'll never understand it, but submission to a higher power is the only existence they have ever known—this is because the systems of meaning that promise to make their lives easier/safer/more ordered actually imprison them and limit their free will

Consumption vs Creation—there are those who consume and there are those who create

Art vs Advertisement—All postmodern media is used to manipulate/control (they tell you "YOU are the one!" but in reality squash your individuality/free-will)

Sensory Perception: An irrational existence (our existence) = the intake of sensory information. There are many senses that we cannot access/intake (e.g. electromagnetic waves/UV light); there are creatures/species in the world who have extra-sensory perception, can feel/understand things our character can't...another way of disempowering him

Disempowerment: our hero is powerless, passive, a passenger

Counter-culture vs Culture: revolutionary subcultures are either subsumed by the dominant culture or destroyed

Collective Consciousness

With internet, EVERYONE is a meaning maker...post modern oversaturation of symbols. A world overflowing with symbolism

Characters:

Main character: rogue space-drifter; sexless, faceless, devoid of physical attributes and personality

Are characters divided by race, gender, species (including robots/AI), class, religion, or something else?

Our Hero:

Does not have a destiny, is not given a prophecy by some mysterious figure foretelling his immense power and great deeds...knows nothing of his past and nothing of his future. In this world, everyone is fed a destiny by the machine/government through media/advertisements (YOU are important, YOU are special, YOU are the future...) When everyone is important, no one is.

Stories To Adapt Content From:

Dune; A Brave New World; Foundation; 1984; Solaris; Ghost in the Shell

Famous Sci-Fi Main Character Arcs:

(Star Wars) A peasant who meets a mysterious knight, and learns of his destiny/past...rises up to overthrow a seemingly unconquerable evil

(Dune) A prince who becomes a peasant who becomes an emperor/god/all-powerful being

The Underground Man

(Matrix) A hacker who meets a mysterious man who frees/empowers him and tells him of his destiny and immense powers...becomes a god

(1984) A regular dude working under a totalitarian gov who tries to become more than who he is...is swallowed and consumed

(Brave New World) ?

(Tron) A regular kid who knows little of his past/destiny and inadvertently is sucked into a world where he learns of his destiny and becomes all-powerful/heroic