*Money: A Life’s Game*

Money is a game that is open to interpretation. The player may think of the money as its own abstract entity or he can think of the money as an instrument in his personal life.

I made the game to be a reflection on the concept of money and its role in our society.

I wanted the gameplay to be simple. Just taking the money on a trip through several checkpoints that represent a transaction. Each of these checkpoints are made out of familiar icons that represent either a place or an event in real life in which money “lives”. I wanted the trip to be through a maze because in real life money doesn’t go through a clean and defined path.

The whole game is comprised of two levels. The game starts with the money freshly coming out of the “central bank” which is where the lifecycle of money begins. The first level is a simple maze, with familiar events and places and it has been made to give a sense of what the game is about. The second level is a slightly larger maze, and there are checkpoints that represent some ethically questionable events. If the player just goes through them, he will reach the last checkpoint in which time will consume the money and at the end some more money gets created again restarting the cycle. If the player stops moving, he is presented with two choices, either stop or continue the game. For me that is the part of the game with the strongest message. If he continues, the money will keep moving normally. If the player decides to stop the game, the game will restart meaning that even though some money stops moving, more money will get created. The outcome of both actions represent the reality of our society. The game never really ends and even if the player decides to stop before going through the unethical checkpoints, someone else will and the cycle will keep repeating.

On the visual choices I made, almost every time the money goes through a checkpoint, it changes its “face”. There are moments in which this face doesn’t change. I decided to leave it unchanged because in real life there might be times in which money doesn’t change its face like if you pay with a 10 dollar bill and the person with that 10 dollar bill pays something else with it. There are also times in which what changes is the environment and not the face of the money. When these changes happen, the core game still the same. With these environment changes I wanted to represent that money can affect the outside world but its lifecycle still pretty much the same.

The color palette of the game is limited. Money, although can be used to create enjoyable moments, is normally thought of as a boring subject. This is why I decided to make it gray and black. There is a contrast between the color on money and the black of the checkpoints. This is because I wanted to emphasize the idea that money keeps “living” regardless of where it is or has been to. The checkpoints change to green to symbolize that money has already “cleared” that event or space in its lifecycle. It is also used as a visual cue for the player. The end point is red in the beginning and only changes to green once all checkpoints have been cleared. There is a deeper meaning into the end point color. As a consumerist society, we are always encouraged to buy more and more. The end point is there to do exactly that, encourage the movement of money through all the checkpoints. However, if the player were to pass through the end point while it is red, he will find out that he is able to move to the next level. This is done on purpose to represent two ideas depending on the role assigned to the money by the player. If the player thinks of the money as his instrument, then the idea is that it is okay if he doesn’t go and buy everything he is being encouraged to. If on the other hand he thinks of the money as its own entity, then the idea is that money just keeps moving to the next transaction as it doesn’t keep track, it just is.

I added audio to give the game an extra layer of depth. There are only two audio components in the game. The “kaching” sound that is in every checkpoint to emphasize that a transaction is being made and the song *It Never Rains of Southern California* originally by Albert Hammond and instrumentalized by Nick Perito Orchestra.The song is an upbeat melody that plays on a loop. I chose this song because I feel it makes the game more enjoyable and contrasts with the plain mechanic of the game. Also because if someone were to look into the lyrics of the original song he will find it ironic. Music is often use in malls to make the shopping experience more comfortable and so consumers spend money with more ease. The song in the game is trying to emulate the same feeling. It never changes regardless of the type of transaction to represent that no matter what happens with money we will always be comforted.