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Fascination – Individual VR Project

Fascination is a classic carnival game based in rolling a ball towards a five by five grid. When the ball falls into one of the holes, the corresponding light on the board lights up. The ball returns to the player and the player rolls the ball again. Play continues until the board has five lights lit in a row like in Bingo. The game is played competitively with the goal to be the first to achieve the win condition. Many years ago, Fascination parlors were incredibly popular with many flocking there to play against friends. Sadly, Fascination parlors have died out with only one play-for-cash parlor remaining in the United States. At this Fascination parlor, up to 30 people can play at once wagering five cents, 10 cents, or a dollar depending on the game. After placing their money on the counter, the game begins and the winner takes all! I have never had the opportunity to play Fascination and certainly haven’t had the opportunity to make money off of it. This served as my inspiration for the project.

Fascination VR is my recreation of the popular game in Virtual Reality. By creating this, I would hope to achieve a few goals. First, I would want to introduce people to this game that do not live near a place where they can play. To be honest, having been unable to play it myself I was developing with myself in mind for that. Second, I want to create a way for players to practice their skills for free while not at a parlor. After practicing for a while, they could go to a real parlor and put their skills to the test for money.

Virtual Reality is a good medium to achieve these goals thanks to the simplicity of the game, but the need for a large game device. It is impractical for a person that wants to try out Fascination to acquire a real Fascination table themselves. With Virtual Reality, the player can have a virtual table right there. The simplicity of the game lends it to be easily played by a player in virtual reality. They simply have to “grab” a ball then roll and release it towards the holes. Anyone can quickly pick this game up and play it. Additionally, this simplicity and ease to pick up may inspire more physical Fascination parlors to pop up which would only lead to the game becoming more popular.

My largest critique of VR for my goals is that part of the excitement of Fascination is the multiplayer aspect, the loud beepers when someone wins, and the actual risk/reward of money. Due to the isolating nature of virtual reality, this game will never quite be as thrilling as when you’re surrounded by people that you’re competing against. Additionally, the physics will never be exactly equal to the physics of the real world and the player won’t be able to grip the ball exactly as they would in the real world. This weakens the appeal of using the game to practice for the real world.

While it may not be perfect, not many people get to experience Fascination nowadays. It was thrilling developing something that could give someone a taste of this classic experience.