



Automagic 3D Optimization
 Boost rendering performance
 Eliminate tedious work
 Reduce development cost



GAME JOBS

NEWS

FEATURES

BLOGS

EVENTS

CONTRACTORS

NEWSLETTER

STORE

SEARCH

GO

ALL

CONSOLE/PC GAMES

SOCIAL/ONLINE GAMES

SMARTPHONE/TABLET GAMES

INDEPENDENT GAMES

GAME DEVELOPER
ON GAMASUTRA

Member Login

Email:

Password:

LOGIN

Forgot Password? | Sign Up



Latest News

View All

May 12, 2013

- Leaving AAA: Why Naughty Dog's star designer became a teacher [11]
- Warren Spector: Use the storytelling tools that work for games [13]
- Time to move on from the gameplay vs. story debate [33]

Latest Blogs

View All

Post

RSS

May 12, 2013

- Book Review: 'You' by Austin Grossman
- Techniques for Finding Unlisted Game Internships
- Coping with Comparison [3]
- PR Pro Tips: Targeting And Pitching Your Game To Media [1]
- There's good in you yet, F2P games, I can sense it! [1]

Latest Jobs

View All

Post a Job

RSS

May 12, 2013

- Double Helix Games Senior Animator
- Double Helix Games Senior VFX Artist
- The Workshop 3D Animator
- Double Helix Games Senior Tools Programmer
- Double Helix Games Senior Systems/Technology Engineer
- Red Storm Entertainment, a Ubisoft Studio UI Engineer

Press Releases

View All

RSS

May 12, 2013

- MONACO: WHAT'S YOURS IS MINE, THE ULTIMATE...



Analysis: *Every Day's* Not The Same 'Art Game'

EXCLUSIVE

[Gamasutra news director Leigh Alexander looks at Molleindustria's *Every Day The Same Dream* and how it is -- and isn't -- like other "art games", to great success on all fronts.]

Every Day The Same Dream is the latest endeavor from Molleindustria's Paolo Pedercini, developed in just six days for the [Experimental Gameplay Project's](#) "art game" theme. In the words of its creator, it's a game about "alienation and refusal of labour" -- and it also turns out to be a demonstration of why games are better suited to some artistic statements than any other medium.

It's a short game -- really, more experiment than not, although it just manages to stand on its own as an experience powerful for its brevity. The player is a faceless, vaguely art-deco stick figure cast in a black and white world; using only the arrow keys, he must commute to his office.

And that's all, essentially -- arrive at the figure's cubicle, and the player will have to start the same rote day all over again. You could almost call it Orwellian if not for its modern vibe and clean, chic lines: Plain suit, endless march of identical cars, subtly alarming rows of office drones who look exactly like you.

The game knows that the player's first thought, upon obeying the instructions and arriving at work, will be how to disrupt this soulless routine (a mysterious old lady in our drone-hero's elevator will offer subtle clues if it's not immediately clear). So the player's task very quickly becomes finding ways to subvert the limitations of the world in which the protagonist lives.

The game's ultimate conclusion, once the player has discovered all the possible avenues of subtle disobedience, is less satisfying than the lead-up, but it's not useful to evaluate *Every Day The Same Dream* on its narrative or "message."

There's often a temptation, with art games, to analyze what they are trying to "say." *Every Day The Same Dream* is most useful when viewed as an example of how the specific nature of video games -- with interface, interaction and natural player tendencies -- can be used to offer experiences that passive media can't possibly.

A world rendered in two dimensions, where left and right are the only comprehensible inputs, suits the world Pedercini has built to challenge its hero; the game is designed specifically for a player's natural tendency to explore and push the boundaries of game design. And their desire to do so organically dovetails with the wishes of the drone-hero: The player wants to test the constraints of the game world just as much as the character wants to test the rules of his.

Next-generation commercial games march ever-closer to the holy grail of immersion and realism. Audiences criticize invisible walls, artificial constraints, and all the places where players' reality is interrupted by the artifice of design. Rather than combat this artifice, *Every Day The Same Dream* employs it, and by itself makes a compelling case for the power of design to be the message, rather than a simple conveyance.

It's an approach familiar to many games we refer to as "art games" -- Jonathan Blow's rewind mechanic in *Braid* has thematic value to the game's message; Tale of Tales' *The Graveyard* makes its

January 12, 2010 | By Leigh Alexander

11 comments

More: [Console/PC](#), [Indie](#), [Exclusive](#)

advertisement

ENTER THE
**INTEL PERCEPTUAL
 COMPUTING
 CHALLENGE
 TODAY!**

intel

» RAGNAROK 2: LEGEND OF THE SECOND RANKED #1 MMORPG...

» Bad Bots coming for Steam

» SwingBox and SwingBox HD - FREE over the...

» The Age of Shadows Approaches!

About

- » **Editor-In-Chief:**
Kris Graft
- » **Features Director:**
Christian Nutt
- » **Senior Contributing Editor:**
Brandon Sheffield
- » **News Editors:**
Mike Rose, Kris Graft
- » **Editors-At-Large:**
Leigh Alexander, Chris Morris
- » **Advertising:**
Jennifer Sulik
- » **Recruitment:**
Gina Gross

[Comment Guidelines](#)

Advertise with Gamasutra

statement in allowing the player to experience frustration in controlling the avatar of an elderly woman.

But *Every Day The Same Dream* stands out because it avoids traditional "art game" pitfalls. Firstly, it doesn't tip its hand too early. Writer and designer Emily Short [recently criticized](#) Steven Lavelle's *Home* for being evident about its "message" from the beginning, for example. Her article notes that these overt conventions may be poignant when players first experience them, but that too many games where mechanics alone drive at a "point" will soon lose their impact for anyone.

Secondly, *Every Day The Same Dream* succeeds because it's not too heavy-handed. Short's editorial also mentions *The Graveyard* for making effective use of interaction -- but not being especially satisfying to the player. Rather than tell the player how to think, *Every Day The Same Dream* allows itself to be thought-provoking.

For artists, the balance between being literal and being vague is quite challenging -- and striking that balance correctly is crucial to the success of a work. *Every Day The Same Dream* achieves this, for the most part.

Players may not realize that their existentialist struggle is reflected in the gameplay itself until they've already completed the game. The mechanics serve the experience; they aren't the experience in and of themselves.

It's far more nuanced from a narrative standpoint than other games that have dealt with ideas of constraint, repetition and futility. Most interesting at all about its approach is that it derives impact not from enforcing what players *cannot* do -- as with *Home* -- but from adding maximum impact to that which they *can* do.

Even though it's an experiment -- if it were fiction, it'd be flash fiction, not a short story -- it holds subtle but important lessons for the school of game design that aims to leverage, not transcend, the conventions of interactivity.

[[Play Pedercini's Every Day The Same Dream here](#). Visit the [Experimental Gameplay Project here](#).]

Tweet

Like

0

Share

1

Top Stories



Leaving AAA: Why Naughty Dog's star designer became a teacher



Warren Spector: Use the storytelling tools that work for games



Time to move on from the gameplay vs. story debate



This OS could turn Google Glass into a game device

[\[Next News Story\]](#) [\[View All\]](#)

Comments

David Crooks

12 Jan 2010 at 7:59 am PST



My reaction to playing the game: "Nothing's happening...nothing's happening...nothing's happening....heh, I went to work in my underpants...nothing's happening...huh, that cemetery scene was weird...wait, that's the ending? WHAT THE HELL KIND OF ARTY CRAP IS THIS PIECE OF..RRGGGGHH!!"

Seriously, I can stand artiness, or pretentiousness, or whatever, but at least do something INTERESTING with it. Having a relatively out-of-the-ordinary art style doesn't mean you can do whatever you want and make something that is bereft of (perceived) content and then have a bunch of people in berets snap their fingers in applause.

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Timmy GILBERT

12 Jan 2010 at 8:01 am PST



I have yet to play the game but i find this insightful!

Let me summerize this to increase the range of the article.

In a short from narrative terms:

THIS game succeed at having introduction IN gameplay terms rather than cinematics, and cleverly embed THE CALL TO ADVENTURE in PLAYER ACTION.

IN gameplay term:

There is a fake "gameplay loop" that the player have to break in order to reach the real gameplay



**GAMASUTRA
JOBS**

**THE GAME
INDUSTRY
CAREER
RESOURCE**

gamasutra.com/jobs



and start the adventure. It imply for the player "disruptive boundaries" actions. This mechanics can be enhance with a "leap of faith" to shatter boundaries to heigten emotional involvement.

Generally game start right after the call to adventure, we only play development and never introduction.

The first time i thought about it, it was in english class, we were reading Lady chaterley beginning. It was a huge painful wall of text that subtly lay down thématics. Fonctionnaly i thought that was an awesome and powerful way to prepare the reader and thought "how can we make this in game?". The problem was there was no action per se, and in game you need to DO, that's wahy generally it is cinematics. In movie generally we have the huge Pan/travelling shoot with génériques before we get to the character.

It's not a new problem and many game have try to tackle it.

In half life the player is set on "rail" and is led blindly from action to action, but it is still the game that direct him. In another world from eric chahi the last part of the introduction push the player around through threat and let him have some leap of faith, narrative is essentially driven by a "movement-collision" scheme. But still the player does not commit the leap of faith on a decision of his own which is the massive improvement brought by this article.

I think "Movement - collision" (let's called it moco) is an important concept to grasp for narration in game. Game today use a simple implementation we call "scripted sequence", you move and trigger a "thing happen" scene, but it's rare that moco is use to actually enhance the sense of agency like the article describe. To be effective moco must move around the "stake space" of the narrative, for exemple a female shoes that suddenly broke is not important... unless the character who wear the shoes is chase by a killer or is a model on podium, it may have even greater signifiance in the whole narrative stake (think sarah connor vs random props girls). By letting player ACT the moco by using clever hint "bounderies shattering" it may move game story telling to new interactive levels.

Now maybe i over stepped the real thing that happen in the game (i have yet to play it), but the reflexion behind the article still shine !

Great article Leigh!

(edited)

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Leonardo Ferreira

12 Jan 2010 at 8:30 am PST



I think the set-up for the message was pretty much ruined for me as the very first thing I did was to arrive at the office in my underwear, and be promptly fired by the evil boss. In the next day, everything was right again. Since the game allowed my to do that, it kinda worked against the overall message, which is quite interesting...

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Bruno Dion

12 Jan 2010 at 9:35 am PST



@Leonardo Ferreira

Or even worse, you could interpret it has: whatever you do, however much you push the boundaries, in makes no difference in the end. It's a pretty tragic game when you look at it this way.

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Joe Cooper

12 Jan 2010 at 9:37 am PST



Ironically, the message was pretty canned and shows no independent thought whatsoever.

Maybe that's part of it? Should I picture a thousand faceless artists in cubicles making the same dystopian piece in different mediums?

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Russell Carroll

12 Jan 2010 at 9:40 am PST



Very thoughtful and thought-provoking, I enjoyed the game immensely. Thanks for talking about it, I wouldn't have likely known about it otherwise.

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Sean Currie

12 Jan 2010 at 10:26 am PST



@ David Crooks

From your comment I think you stopped playing halfway through. The game has a definite narrative arc (and a definite ending) but you have to play around a little. It's pretty fantastic. Although, like all art games I love, it has invariably killed my love for whatever big budget game I'm playing.

I agree with Joe, the message is pretty standard - it kind of reminds me of Pleasantville but the act of engaging a very typical narrative trope in such an atypical framework was refreshing.

I love it not only when games prove themselves worthy of the "art" moniker, but also when they make fools out of disbelievers. This does both very, very well. :)

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Timmy GILBERT

12 Jan 2010 at 12:19 pm PST



Art can be silly too, does not have to be always EPIC :)

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Michael Samyn

12 Jan 2010 at 1:14 pm PST



I find the format quite interesting. But isn't it about time to move on to discussing content now?

I find the retro graphics well chosen because the narrative of the piece seems incredibly dated. Do real people still have lives like this? Where they wake up in the morning and go to work in a cubicle and all that? Seems a bit like the artist is trying to make fun of people who don't live a bohemian life while in reality everybody does. Or can all of this be included in complexity of the piece?

I'm not dismissing the game at all. Just trying to elevate the discussion a bit. The design of the game is interesting and appropriate. We can discuss that too. But the barbarian comments about whether or not this is art or how art is rubbish are boring me about as much as The Graveyard bores the 1337 h4xorz.

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Joe Cooper

12 Jan 2010 at 2:10 pm PST



@Samyn

I agree; obviously this art. People 'round here have decided that if its art, its better, so when people don't like something, they declare it "not art" when it is, or insist "games are art" when they aren't, and so on...

Moving on...

The narrative seemed dated to me. As in, this has to be the eleventy dozenth time I've seen it.

I wasn't sure if it was meant to be dated though. The visual obviously was, but I think the art style was chosen because its strongly associated with modernism - even if the audience doesn't know the word "modernism", they'll still get the right associations.

There seems to be an effort to paint the world through shit tinted glasses and I don't think it rings true.

I suspect its just regurgitating some hipster culture cliches - which I suppose is actually good enough if you're doing some presentation experiment like this.

It does demonstrate well enough using interactive media as a medium for expression. Its art.

However, it is all about the presentation, style and use of technology, with a canned narrative, and you'd sum up Transformers 2 the same way.

However however, I enjoyed Transformers 2.

And this was kinda neat.

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

Michael Jungbluth

13 Jan 2010 at 8:12 am PST



The way the screen is framed and the camera choices made are genius. Walking through the office, in either direction, builds so much dread or anticipation, that is shows how powerful a simple camera decision can be. The art direction as a whole is sublime and fits in perfectly with the late 50's, early 60's dystopian view of the man's daily grind.

[Login to Reply or Like](#)

[Login to Comment](#)



Creativity & Innovation
tailored to your needs



FEATURED UBM TECH SITES: [Game Developers Conference](#) | [Gamasutra](#) | [Game Developer Mag](#) | [Game Career Guide](#)

OUR MARKETS: [Business Technology](#) | [Channel](#) | [Electronics](#) | [Game & App Development](#)

Working With Us: [Game Network Advertising](#) | [Event Calendar](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Statement](#) | Copyright © 2013 UBM Tech, All rights reserved