CMS.300 – Intro to Video Game Theory

Session 17– GAME AESTHETICS

Reading

Camper, Retro-reflexivity

Concepts/Keywords

- remediation
- platform studies
- intertextuality

Goals

- Exemplary analysis, each section shows different types of analysis (platform/technology, gameplay) → Focus on historical context, how content relates the game to other texts
- Introduction to game aesthetics
- close reading

Defining game aesthetics

- Difficult term (we'll see next week)
- Based on reading
  - Retro aesthetics
    - audiovisual style
    - gameplay – difficulty
  - Other examples
    - VVVVVV
    - Cave Story
    - Knytt Stories
    - Shotgun Ninja

What are “retro” aesthetics

Visual:

Resolution, Colour Palette, Sprites (number of colours)

Audio:

Chiptunes, Low-Fi Sound

Gameplay:

Difficulty (home computers are the hardest games), scarce savegames, appeal to rote memory/constant trial & error

→ EACH RETRO GAME PAYS HOMAGE TO SPECIFIC AESTHETICS – one can ID the platform they refer to
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Why Retro games?

- Nostalgia is part of it – although these games also appeal to players who were not alive when the platforms were out
- Aesthetic restraint; almost a statement
- Associated indie developers – harkens back to “bedroom coders”
  - smaller teams or solo developers
- Appeal to literacy – Identifying the platform and games (although not necessary to enjoy them)
- BUT – these games are playtested, accommodated to new audiences – VVVVVV save spots!

For presentation assignment, the goal is tracing the context and influences on other games