CMS.300 – Intro to Video Game Theory

Session 8 – IMMERSION

Readings
  Murray, 'Immersion'
  Csikszentmihalyi, Flow

Concepts/Keywords
  • immersion
  • transitional objects
  • luminal space
  • avatar
  • flow
  • enjoyment

Goals
  • Convey the complex concept of immersion, and its multiple meanings
  • Explore the ways/conditions for immersion
  • Understand that breaking immersion is OK

IMMERSION
  Term: is recurrent in reviews, design vocabulary, it's more of a buzzword than a useful term

Q: What is immersion?
  Murray: being immersed in environment, like being in a swimming pool
  result of encyclopedic or participatory properties of digital environments

Immersion as Flow – activity that we enjoy, that we're engaged in.
(Flow – another misused concept)

Q: Why are immersion and flow so important to games?

(MIND – some factors are not covered by flow, just by immersion)
  • Enjoyment and involvement
  • Becoming somebody else
    o Avatars / masks
  • Transportation/enchantment → luminal space: role of spoilsports
  • Focus/self-drive
  • Continuity of activity, even if it’s a hard task

Immersion is also “threatening”
  • separation from Real Life, losing touch with reality → although self-centered/schizo personality can prevent flow
  • usually associated with a medium (Don Quixote, Comics, TV, Video Games)
  • BUT not everyone is immersed in activities the same way; different people enjoy different things

Breaking immersion doesn't need to be traumatic, the 4th wall is a construct
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(8) Components of enjoyment
- doing something that can be completed
- focus and concentration
- clean goals
- immediate feedback
- deep but effortless involvement (or at least it feels effortless), which separates activity from everyday life
- sense of control
- sense of self disappears (communal maybe) but stronger sense of self emerges after the activity
- altered sense of time

Q: Examples of flow doctrines
Q: How did the games on Tuesday try to achieve immersion? How did they fail?
- Duck Hunt
- Trespasser
- Odama
- Lifeline
- Virtual Boy