How the project came about by Sam

**Final Project idea - PUNNET - February 2021**

*If I’m to show my thought process I would have to refer to a series of messages as this is how the idea was formed*

(bold is me)

**“lets start a love quadrilateral”**

“Lets start a cubilateral relationships”

“Were we cheat on astral projections of our future selves”

**“Thats like an excellent idea”**

**“that will be my animation”**

“Would make for a cool dating sim”

“non-Eucludian love”

“Euclidian is like geometry that follows our rules of space time”

“Non Eucludian is weird space time shit”

“Yo no cap”

“I actually wanna do this”

“As a videogame”

**“Make this dating sim?”**

“Yes”

**“Joint venture”**

“We could make the illustrations”

“Yes”

**“Its actually a very good idea”**

**“I cld tell u got urself thinking”**

**“And that in turn got me thinking”**

“YO”

“one of the words for the words project is future”

“Ive done next to nothing”

“Wanna do it?”

**“As like a”**

**“group project?”**

“YES”

**“If that works then ofc”**

**“All i have is ideas on a page”**

**“Which is less than u”**

“Same really just mine are drawings i made whilst waiting for my tacobell”

**“If it works as a 2 man mission then thats classy”**

“Yeah we dont have to make an acuall full game, just some mock concpet screens”

**“and some short animation bits”**

**“a lil video gameplay”**

“Yeah simple animation loops”

“Like characters blinking”

“We can discuss it via call”

So in a discord call a couple days later we started assigning ourselves and each other jobs, I was to be tasked with the whole story (and its boarding), writing, the editing and about a third of the artwork as Leo would take the artwork , such as concept art, the backgrounds, the 3D and whatever else comes up from my ideas.

At some point we found ourselves not knowing what our story was actually about or how it would go despite being an interesting idea, so I decided to scrap the basis of it being a time travel type game but still keep the idea of it being a dating simulator with a psychological touch, and in our couple of days before we had this call I had been watching Charlie Kauffman’s films in an existential stupor and in a film of his released last year called “I’m Thinking of Ending Things” is an old lonely man who fabricates a version of the world where he has a girlfriend and is a younger man, where many subtle clues are littered throughout that what you’re watching is all in the man’s head.

Although I thought the film was thoroughly unenjoyable, when tasked by both myself and Leo to rethink what the basis of our game would be, I came up with this, after about a minute of laughable nothing ideas: “a man or woman is on a spaceship or space station, somewhere in space, and they’re all alone, and they have been here for ages so they are very lonely and so they imagine people to date and talk to these imaginary people” which was surprisingly plausible and then we both started running with this one instead instantly dropping the other idea and never mentioning it again.

Not only was this new idea far more fun to think about, but it also still worked with the word Future as the premise is that Earth is now uninhabitable due to human negligence. It works as a humorous oxymoronic subversion of a dating simulator game which is typically not based around a mentally ill person’s loneliness and imagination (in space).

I’d constantly shoot ideas at Leo and he’d shoot them back, culminating in more and more development for the premise;

*The character manifests their emotions and thoughts into physical form, and manifestations are the object of conversation and potential relationships for the main character*. *The character always wears a space suit because we don’t know if they are male or female, and neither do they and they don’t want to know the answer; they have forgotten what humans look like*.

This grants us more creative freedom to make the manifestations into whatever gender and shape we want them to be.

*The character starts off the game by intentionally turning off the power in the spaceship so that its pitch black, making it easier for their brain with all its mental dysfunctionality to create people to talk to in the darkness, as if the lights were on it wouldn’t be possible (drawing on sleep paralysis slightly), plus the darkness could make it monochromatic to accentuate the emotions through the one colour we give them.*

This will be a virtual world that can appeal to the online gamer audience. It will be in Youtube and will grow with its users and be responsive to the audience participation.

All these ideas were created with the primary focus being able to make a story that could work as best as possible with its art. We also decided to make the art pixel art as I only have a mouse and pixel art is quite simple to make with a mouse, and both of us had a program called Aseprite and Leo had a very impressive pixel art resume. It then fell to us to start creating, and neither of us really knew what to do first, so I created a list on the 4th of feb [https://docs.google.com/document/d/15j\_7HpSxBduJAXeQt1JvLaAFqQ1F98z1P\_cV\_CMeEQI/edi](https://docs.google.com/document/d/15j_7HpSxBduJAXeQt1JvLaAFqQ1F98z1P_cV_CMeEQI/edit)to try and help us decide on which emotions we were going to make the character interact with as we knew there was nowhere near enough time to do more than a couple (which might be even less than a couple given the fact that it’s the 19th now and we haven't started on these rooms yet).

Later on, Leo and i discussed the why factor for why this person was in space and harkened back to when i spitballed that they were looking to terraform other planets to make them habitable as a throwaway idea. We develop this idea into

*there was a terraforming machine/reactor onboard, but it malfunctioned/exploded and now the ship is teeming with vegetation and broken, aimlessly floating through space*.

This in turn gave us the idea that the only way our character has been surviving is by living off the mushrooms on the ship, which without making it solely & immaturely about someone on a psilocybic bender, gives another reason as to our character’s madness.

***Psilocybe*** *(/ˌsaɪloʊˈsaɪbi/ SY-loh-SY-bee) is a genus of gilled mushrooms, growing worldwide, in the family Hymenogastraceae. Most or nearly all species contain the psychedelic compounds* ***Psilocybin****,* ***psilocin*** *and baeocystin.*

The primary idea though was that the vegetation on a spaceship idea works very well for art as it would illustrate the stark contrast between futuristic technology and an overgrowth of nature. It also does well to show that a lot of time has passed which is a vital part of the story. A great unintentional inspiration that Leo and I discovered we share is the game Portal 2, in which you are the lone human in a futuristic testing facility filled with sentient robots, however the facility is in disrepair since the first game’s end, and this means that there is tons of debris in the halls of the facility as well as a complete overgrowth of natu

I mentioned the linework of these two (incredible) pieces of concept art reminded me of a single-issued comic from 2011 <https://www.thinkwithportals.com/comic/#10> to which Leo said that he loved that comic and that he loved Portal 2 to which i said the same not even considering how similar our idea is with Portal 2’s (lonely, only human in a decrepit broken future setting overgrown by nature through time with schizophrenic scrawlings all over the wall…)

our wall texture



Portal 2's wall texture



We discussed it in more depth because why would there be a soviet spacecraft with a communist aesthetic in the future, but we worked around it with the premise that this is an alternate reality where the soviets did conquer the whole planet and completely ruined it, sending people out in spacecrafts with tesseracts capable of terraforming new planets.

Over the span of a couple of days, Leo was making doors in 3D as I was making the UI and writing the first scene of the game. The reason for the former is because we thought incorporating a 3D modelled and animated door on a 2d pixel background would be a great use of his 3D skills whilst keeping true to the artstyle, as well as serving to subvert the player’s expectation of how the door would open.

He called me up in a “eureka” type moment as he told me he had figured out how to render his 3D models in blender so that they would all be pixellated. So the idea is that the background leaves a big black space where the door should be so that when the door is layered over the black space it opens up to reveal the black space.

n order to create a suitable effect to put behind the window of the cockpit, I thought back to my train journey back from Bournemouth on dec 3rd. On this train journey I was using my keyboard’s trackpad to create a basic space animation with stars slowly moving in different directions and fading in and out with the power of layering and tweening, reducing the opacity on almost black lines to dim the stars behind them and leaving the stars in the foreground as the motion tween would move and rotate them around the screen.

Unfortunately this effect was terrible and did not fit the game at all. I tried my hand at redemption by putting it through premiere to pixellate it & use the twirl effect, which sort of worked to some degree. Layering this behind the window looked completely horrible and was an insult to Leo’s amazing background design, so I had to come up with something else.

Luckily this something else was a godsend and I’m not entirely sure what inspired it. I said to Leo after this didn’t work that everything was okay as I had just come up with another idea......

Paint in water. I looked up royalty free videos of paint in water in slow motion (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQ4\_GCr0V8A&t=30s)

 

and put that through premiere, zooming in on the center, pixellating it and changing the RGB curves on it to be not white and blue, but darkening it so that it was black, green, red and blue. This created a very impressive effect, but for some reason I wasn’t giving up on the idea that I could get the stars to work. I put them into premiere over the new paint effect, used a chroma key on the black in the image and moved the tolerance up to the point where you could see some streaks of black still. I then turned the stars on their side and put a motion tween on them that made them go down along with the paint. I then layered the stars over themselves dozens of times making them fade in and out with the default fade in transition effect. This is the result. <https://youtu.be/Yd0qIKMWxw8>