Video Games: Aesthetics of Artistic Styles

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MDA

- Mechanics, Dynamics, and Aesthetics
  - Tool to analyze games through different views
  - Mechanics - base components: rules, actions, data structures, algorithms
  - Dynamics - run-time behavior of mechanics, responding to player input
  - Aesthetics - emotional responses evoked in the player
- Attempts to bridge gap between development, criticism, and research.
Aesthetics

• Branch of philosophy: nature of art, beauty, and taste, the creation and appreciation of beauty.

• Principles underlying and guiding the work of a particular artist or artistic movement.

• The desirable emotional responses evoked by the game.
Portal (2007)

- Game is clean and sterile
- Overly clean look adds to the mystery
- Walls have a contrasting effect
  - Calming because of simplicity
  - Confusing because of sterility and oddness
- Testing chambers
  - Sterility and research go together.
Minimalism

• Industrial
• Simple shapes, lines, colors
  – Sterile testing feel
  – Complementary blue/orange
• Minimalist – only necessary elements
• Makes the puzzle more clear
  – Originally like Half-Life, but players were distracted
Back Rooms

- Stark contrast to the minimal test chambers
  - Sterility starts to fall apart
  - Dark rundown back rooms
  - Everything is in disrepair
- Uneasiness grows, still the feeling of isolation, but even more unsettling
Bioshock (2007)

• Set in 1960s
• Rapture build in 1940s
• References to Ayn Rand
  – Objectivism: idea that one should follow their own self-interest and profit from their own abilities and ambitions.
  – Fountainhead published in 1943
  – Many names are similar to those found in Ayn Rand's books
Art Deco

- Popular in the 1930s
- Represented luxury, glamour, exuberance, and faith in social and technological progress.
- Feelings of inspiration and grandeur
- Now destroyed and empty, a ruin of the former glory
  - Was not the paradise it was supposed to be
Ōkami (2006)

• Fictionalized historical fantasy in Japan
  – Combines several Japanese myths, legends and folklore
• Celestial Brush
  – Draw on the screen to help with objectives
  – ex. Bridge a gap or create wind
• Unable to render photorealistic on PS2
• Ancient Japanese watercolor brought to life
• Cel shading gives hand-drawn effect
Ink wash painting

• Fewest possible lines and tones
  – Enough for form, texture and effect to be felt.
• Each brush-touch full of meaning
• Useless detail eliminated
• “May be regarded as a form of expressionistic art that captures the unseen”
• Player’s ink is limited by ink wells
  – Like the style – minimal brush strokes
Similarities

• Portal and Okami are both influenced by utility.
• Portal to make goals clear
• Okami couldn't render photorealistic images
• Games wouldn't have the same feel without the changes
• Maybe not have been as popular
• Bioshock and Okami both use art that ties in with the story that is being told.