Thiepval - An explorative recreation of a World War One trench

Stuart Vivers
Abertay University
Kydd Building
Bell Street
01382 308000
1200215@uad.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Acknowledging the fact that as of the centenary of the First World War there are no longer any surviving veterans of the conflict remaining, the Thiepval trench experience is focused on using atmosphere and explorative game mechanics in order to provide an engaging First World War experience for players. The core gameplay involves the exploration of a trench, as well as a recreation of the Thiepval Memorial to the missing, located in France. The aim is to recreate an atmosphere similar to that that would have been present in the frontline trenches of 1916. The game is based on the slow moving, explorative game play found within games such as *Proteus*. The game also looks to provide a realistic First World War trench environment found in games such as the critically acclaimed *Verdun*, and *World War 1 Trenches*. Contrasting on these environments, the exploration of the Thiepval memorial will take on an atmosphere similar to that found in *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture*.

Keywords
Historic, Reconstruction, Atmospheric, Explorative, Education, Public Engagement, Level Design.

Atmospheric/Explorative World War One trench Experience

The Thiepval trench experience is designed around the idea that using a 3D virtual game space can be an effective method in the creation of an emotive learning experience. With the new capabilities of next generation game engines, it has become far easier for educational institutions to create evocative and informative games which can easily be engaged by the public. The creation of realistic First World War assets combined with slow moving, explorative game mechanics allows the player to explore and engage the world in such a way that is not usually expected from a war game. The design motivation for this historical explorative game was to approach level design focusing on realism and atmosphere, along with usability. Minimalist controls, along with simple mechanics allows users of all ages and experience to easily navigate the level and take in the atmosphere.

The creation of a historical environment - in this case a First World War trench - allows for the insertion of factual stories and educational elements to be delivered to the player. The location of Thiepval also gives the game an opportunity to deliver information about three of the regiments which took part in the battles around Thiepval (29th Division, 32nd Division, 36th Ulster Division), which seen some of the heaviest fighting of the war (Robertshaw). There are also numerous heroic VC stories from these regiments which can be visualised within a 3D environment (Evans). By using a 3D game engine, one can surpass a lot of the production costs required when it comes to recreating such historical events and locations in live action form (Kamentez). In the case of a historical environment, a game engine is a far more effective means of recreating locations from the First World War, as well as providing a user interaction. The idea of a game as an educational yet entertaining point of view is also a strong point the game tries to focus on (Audrey).

LUDOGRAPHY

Hergaarden, Matt and Mike Hergaarden (2013). *Verdun 1914-1916*, [PC, OS X, Linux], Blackmill Games, M2H Game Studio.
DADIU Team 2 (2011). *Der Unbekannte Krieg,* [PC, Mac] March production. Denmark.
The Chinese Room (2015) *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture*, [PlayStation 4, PC], Sony Computer Entertainment.
Key and Kanaga (2013). *Proteus*, [PC, Linux, Mac, Playstation 3, Playstation Vita]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Robertshaw, Andrew. *Somme 1916*. Print.
Marix Evans, Martin. *Somme 1914 - 18*. Stroud: The History Press, 2010. Print.
Kamentez, Anya. "Why Video Games Succeed Where The Movie And Music Industries Fail". *Fast Company*. N.p., 2013. Web. 17 Apr. 2016.
Watters, Audrey. "Don'T Forget The Fun Factor In Educational Games". *MindShift*. N.p., 2011. Web. 18 Apr. 2016.
Paths Of Glory. United States: Stanley Kubrick, 1957. film.
"*World War I Trenches* - Gaia 3D Solutions For Schools, Colleges & Universities". *Gaia3d.co.uk*. Web. 10 Mar. 2016.