

Game Design Document

ODYSSEY



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PROLOGUE

Laying in a field, eyes closed, you listen to the whisper of leaves as the wind blows through, grass rustles beneath you tickling your ears, the calming 'shushing' of waves lapping on the shore can be heard in the distance and a faint melodic note that you can't quite place.

You sit up turning your head to see if you can pin point it's origin, you become certain of its direction and choose to investigate.

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS ODYSSEY ACHIEVING?



“Levelling the playing field”

Inspired by videogames such as ‘Lost and Hound’ by Brian Fairbanks, ‘Dear Esther’ by Dan Pinchbeck and Robert Briscoe and the classic, ‘MYST’, by Rand and Robyn Miller. *Odyssey* is an open world exploration of intrigue and inquiry. Players will find themselves freely exploring an island of peaceful paradise as they puzzle solve to locate all five lost Gems.

Odyssey innovates on accessible gameplay, taking into account low vision and blind players;

Game Design: Complete free rein in exploration, players need only listen to audio cues in the game environment to differentiate direction and location. In *Odyssey* the sky is the limit.

Visuals: Using low-poly three-dimensional models with rich and contrasting colours, players with low vision will identify objects of interest with more ease.

Audio: Using a diverse combination of fully audio cues, descriptive audio, voice overs and music we create a virtual playground that is immediately more accessible to more players.

Binaural audio will be utilised to assist in the cognitive mapping of three-dimensional space, while descriptive audio, voiceovers and audio cues will all ultimately deepen the sense of immersion and cohesion for players as they navigate both game space and user interfaces.

Story: By allowing free rein gameplay in a sensory rich environment, players will create their own narrative as they journey about the island.



ODYSSEY WILL



- ❖ Redefine what makes an accessible videogame.
- ❖ Provide an accessible play experience,
- ❖ Provide an accessible interface,
- ❖ Strengthen the growing genre of accessible gaming,
- ❖ Contribute to documenting accessible videogame design approaches in academia, where it currently is non-existent.
 - ❖ Be a hella enjoyable and relaxing experience in playful storytelling.

NAVIGATIONAL AUDIO

“If it’s possible in reality, why not the virtual realm too?”

In real-life everything around us emits noise, in some cases the noise may not be triggered until it makes contact with another object or ourselves. Within *Odyssey’s* environment, we emulate the same behaviour. Every game object within the environment will be emitting one type of audio or another. Trees will creak, leaves will whisper, grass will rustle, rocks will crunch and sand will sift. It is through such folly that players will be able to determine their location and surroundings as their footfalls change depending on terrain.

In real-life we can also determine with some accuracy as to the direction sound is traveling from, with this in mind *Odyssey* uses binaural audio to simulate real-world hearing. For instance atmospheric audio, such as the wind’s pitch, will change according to a player character’s altitude. Meanwhile if a bird were to fly overhead, the player would be able to determine that it approached from above and behind to their left hand side before it traveled to their front, above and to their right.

FOCUS

Similar to Naughty Dog's *Uncharted Series*' 'Hint' and the CD Projekt Red's *Witcher 3* 'Witcher Senses' mechanics, 'Focus' is an ability that allows the player to hone in on a point of interest. In both a visual and auditory manner, allowing players with low vision to pin point an objective or object's location. Which they may lock onto, feeding into the 'Corrective Pathfinding' mechanic.

CORRECTIVE PATHFINDING

'Corrective Pathfinding' is a feature that players may use to assist in locating an objective or point of interest. When they deviate from their course, the player character will provide instructive dialogue. e.g if the 'Focus' was locked onto a birds nest by a river the dialogue may be; "I need to head towards the river." Players will then listen and locate the river through directional audio.

PROXIMITY WARNING

'Proximity Warning's are where upon the player collides with restricted zones in game space and objects of interest, will result in an audio cue accompanied by player character dialogue. e.g "That's a giant eagle, I wonder if it will let me on its back?" or "This cliff edge has a good view of the meadow." By doing so, this allows the player to understand their surroundings and what they may interact with.

INTERACTION

Descriptive audio and an audio cue are provided as players select the ‘interact’ button, the player character will acknowledge the command. e.g “Let’s see what this is.”

ITEM PICKUP

Descriptive audio and an audio cue is provided as player makes character picks up a game object. e.g “Cool, I found one of the Lost Gems!”

INVENTORY

Descriptive audio is provided to explain controls for navigating the ‘Inventory’ and for what is displayed. While a voiceover and audio cue occurs as each item is hovered over and selected.

PUZZLES

Players must locate all missing pieces of the island’s heart that are scattered all around the island, including in the air and in the water. Getting to each piece requires patience and some creativity. There is one Gem per location.

SUMMARY

Putting accessibility first and foremost at the start of the videogame design process, *Odyssey* allows the player to explore three-dimensional space in a non-linear format. It pushes the boundaries and questions what has previously been accepted in the approach to videogame design.

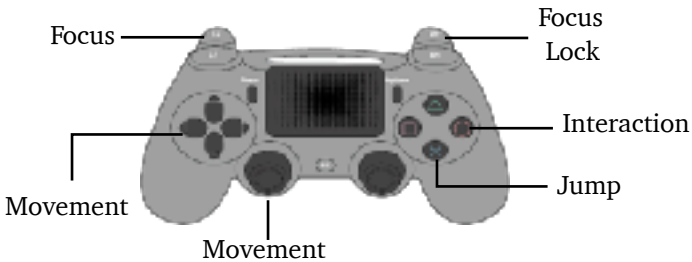
Odyssey is an open invitation to all gamers, regardless of vision level, to step into an equal opportunity virtual realm of play.

DESIGN ANNEX

Break down of interface design & deeper discussion on mechanics

INTERFACE

How Do I play?



INTERFACE BREAKDOWN

Rules to prevent over-scope & complexity

Interaction: A single 'Interact' button with the intention of preventing complexity and confusion.

Jump: Keeping with the standardised that PlayStation games have, in the interest of being user friendly, we will keep the 'X' button as the 'Jump' action button.

Movement: Players will have the option to choose what is more comfortable for them, Arrow Keypad or the Left

analogue stick. (This allows us to discover what the preferred option is in play testing).

Focus: Using the L2 Trigger, should allow for a comfortable hold on the controller while button is unused and pressed.

Focus Lock: Using the R2 Trigger, should allow for a comfortable hold on the controller in addition to giving the player balance, as both hands should not be doing more than two actions at any one time.

AUDIO TYPES

Object Emission: Objects emit foley through directional audio, when nearby.

Sound Decay: All 'game objects' or 'assets' are given a radial directional audio source, that fades the further away a player is to the said object.

Character Generated: Audio created by player character. e.g Breathing and footstep foley.

Descriptive Audio: Describes an object, scene or screen.

Voiceover: States the name of highlighted game object, or refers to character dialogue.

COLLECTABLES

Players will seek out five 'Lost Gems' that fit together to form the Island's heart, all depicted as basic geometric shapes for clear visual representation. Each of the Gems are located in five separate and distinct locations (Mountains, Cave, Forrest, Beach and Sky) to be brought back to the Island's heart, the meadow.

BACKSTORY

You are the Guardian of this Island, you have been awoken from your slumber to discover the elemental gems are missing from the heart of the island, the meadow. You must now journey across the island to locate all five of the missing gems, so that you may return to your slumber.

WORLD BUILDING

Being based on an island, it forces the design to remain within scope while enabling players access to sandbox navigation. Granting the perfect opportunity to play with different player movements, actions and locations.

For each location there lies an option for players to move about in a different manner;

- ❖ Beaches = the option to Swim.
- ❖ Hills/mountains = the option to climb.
- ❖ High Cliff Face = the option to fly among the clouds.
- ❖ Meadow and Forrest = the option to walk or run.
- ❖ Cave = the option to crouch and crawl.

PLAYER MOVEMENT

Taking inspiration from Nintendo's *Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, when a player 'collides' with a different terrain they automatically start swimming in water or start climbing a mountain. What Odyssey will do differently, will be to alert the player of the change by using an audio cue and character

voiceover, prompting the player to select the ‘interact’ button to continue forward. e.g: *splashing of feet as player stands on shoreline* + “I think I could swim here” > *interaction audio cue* > Player selects the interact button > *sloshing water as character moves deeper* + “Ah! it’s cold”. The sound of sloshing water gets deeper the further from land the player travels.

BALANCE

More open-ended gameplay should result in more experimental play.

Combining equal amounts of Audio, Visuals and Story we create and merge the three spheres of immersion that will draw our players in. Throw in gameplay and controls that has had accessibility at the forefront of their design, you open up your virtual playground to a wider demographic of players who will become more involved.