Games I: Design and Architecture

Week 03 (09/11)

- Group Game Concept Proposals
- The "intersection of mechanics and narrative"
- Game Design is Medium Design
- Conceptualization

Game Concept Proposals

- What situations will players find themselves in?
- What will players be thinking, feeling, doing?
- What is the core mechanic?
- What is the player's role? What is the goal?
  - Resources? Obstacles?
- What choices are players given?
- What is interesting and engaging?

Reading Lessons From Giants

Chasing a beam of light

- As a mechanic = show next objective
- As narrative = creates meaning

Reading Lessons From Giants

"The game's lack of exposition until the final act supports numerous readings."

- Subject to interpretation

"The intersection of mechanics and narrative"

- Character animations
  - clumsy sword handling
  - mannerisms toward horse
- Camera angles
  - "wonky" but used to establish a sense of scale
- Pacing
  - provides time to reflect

Game Design is the Meta-Medium

Game Design is Medium Design
- Structural Rules vs Content

Structural Rules define the Medium

Content defines the individual work

Structural Rules

- A novel is composed of words, but a narrator reading the words aloud is understood as separate from the fiction
- An impressionistic painting is comprised of brushstrokes, but each stroke is not intended as a literal representation of the subject

Content

- The particular sequence of chapters in a novel, or certain literary devices
- More abstract games, such as Chess, have minimal content
  - (the pieces, the board)
  - defined by structural rules

Game Design is Medium Design

Artists choose a set of structural rules (the given structure of a painting or a novel) and generate content to fit it

But game designers must create both rules AND content.

Game Design is Medium Design

- Take any game as an example
  - Would it still be the same game without its structural rules? Without its content?
  - Both are integral to a game's definition
  - Gone Home

- "A mistake to separate" game design and content design
  - (remember the intersection of mechanics and narrative)

Chapter 6 – Conceptualization

Creative Process (iterative, not linear)

- Preparation
  - Constantly look for opportunities for challenge and play
- Incubation
- Insight (the 1% inspiration)
- Evaluation
- Elaboration (the 99% perspiration)

Chapter 6 – Conceptualization

Game Journal - a good way to improve creativity

- Pay attention to your emotional response
  - Frustration
  - Exhilaration
  - Confidence
  - Uncertainty
  - Pride
  - Tension
  - Curiosity

Chapter 6 - Conceptualization

Brainstorming

- "Yes, and... !" (no criticism)
- High volume of ideas, low on duration
- Playful environment, write things down
- Vary the method

Brainstorming Techniques

- Pose a Challenge
  - "Design a game in which players must make strong alliances and then betray them."
  - "Design a game with a special role for parents to play together with their children."
  - "Come up with a game that makes interesting use of only one button on for control."

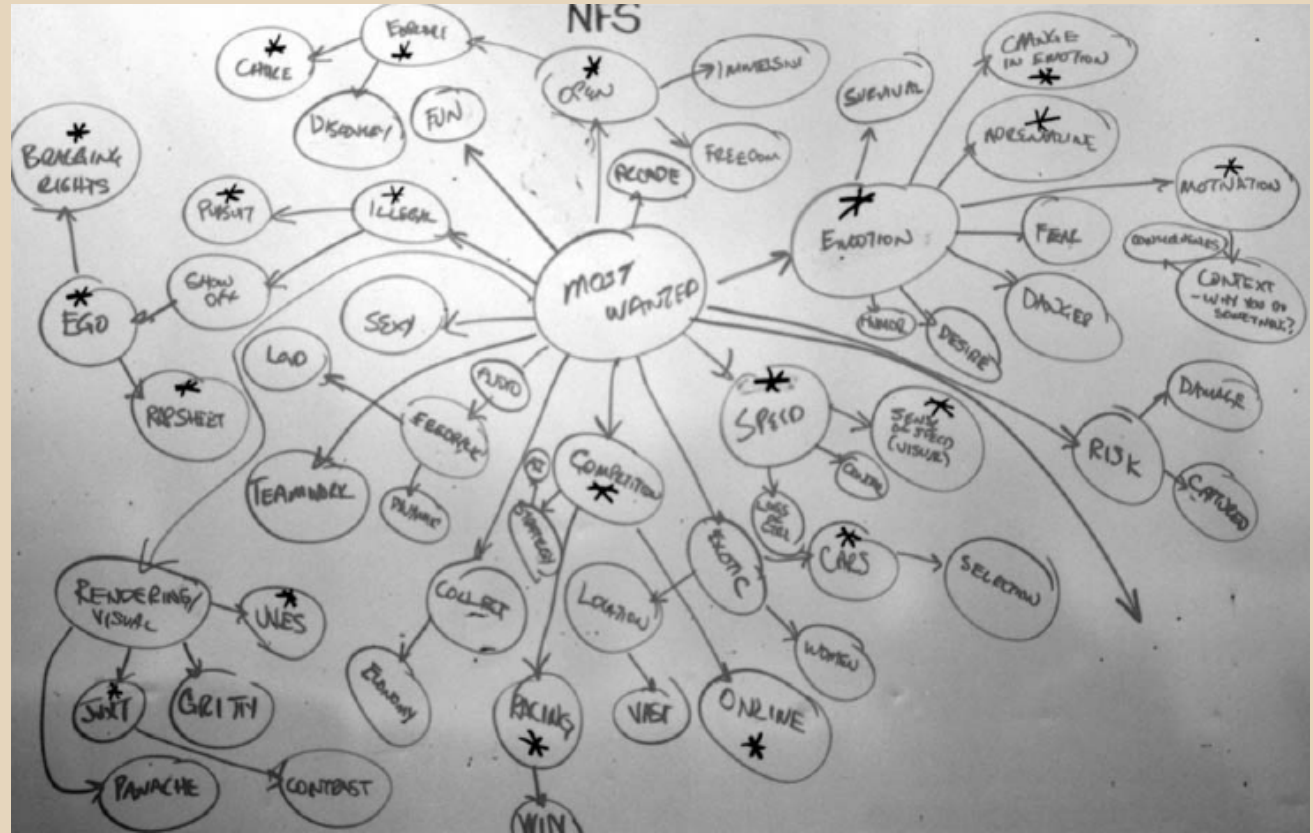# Brainstorming Techniques

Lists and Free Association

Brainstorming Techniques

Index Cards

- Mix and match
- Draw from a hat

Brainstorming Techniques

Mind Map

Turning Ideas into Games

- "Genres produce proven gameplay"
  - "Feature innovation" = modifying existing mechanics

- BUT! These are "solved problems"
  - Don't lock your idea into categories

Turning Ideas into Games

Develop:

- A vision of the player experience
- The formal structure that follows from that vision

What are the "game verbs?"

Turning Ideas into Games

Ask:

- What is the role of the player?
- Does the player have a clear goal?
- What are the obstacles in the way of that goal?
- What kind of resources do they have to accomplish that goal?

Turning Ideas Into Games

Don't get too caught up in the dramatic elements (plot, character)

Gameplay should be the foundation that these rest upon

What about Content vs. Structural Rules?

Assignments For Week 04 (09/18)

- [Group] Concept Document
  - Download instructions
- [Group] Start a Design Log
- Reading:
  - Chapter 2 - The Structure of Games (26-44)
  - Organic Storytelling - Narrative Through Play

- View instructions on the blog

For Week 04 (09/18) - Group

- [Group] Concept Document
  - In one or two paragraphs, describe the essence of your game idea. Try to capture what makes it interesting to you and how the basic gameplay will work.
  - [Download Instructions](#)
- [Group] Start a Design Log
  - Living Document
  - Available to all team members
  - Flow of ideas, design decisions, challenges, etc.

Concept Document - Tips

Try to answer as many of these questions as possible:

- What is the conflict in my game?
- What are the rules and procedures?
- What actions do the players take and when?
- Are there turns? How do they work?
- How many players can play?
- How long does a game take to resolve?
- What is the working title?
- Who is the target audience?
- What platform will this game run on?
- What restrictions or opportunities does that environment have?