

OCTOPUSS PROUDLY PRESENTS:



ACHERON

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT V3

The player has to protect and guide a character through a dark realm but cannot directly control her. Instead the player controls two orbs simultaneously, which can manipulate the physical world by attracting and repelling.



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1 DESIGN HISTORY

1.1 VERSION 0

- Created document template.

1.2 VERSION 1

- Wrote General Info V1.

1.3 VERSION 2

- Updated information to match final product.

1.4 VERSION 3

- Final tweaks.

COLOUR CODING

Text marked in the **Design** colour coding is information especially relevant for designers. This also applies to the **Art** and **Tech** styles. This is used so that department-specific information can be quickly found when scanning over the document.

2 GAME OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION & DESIGN APPROACH

Acheron is a short platform game designed specifically with the twin joystick layout of modern game controllers. In using the relatively new Unreal Engine 4, we try to employ new features and production methodologies aimed at producing a high-quality product. Learning how to work well in a team is also a definite aim of the project, aligned with the framework of the Gamelab environment, simulating development at a professional level in student teams.

2.2 GENERAL INFORMATION

2.2.1 GENRE

2.5D Twin-Stick Controlling Side-Scrolling Puzzle Action Adventure Platform Game.

2.2.2 SIMILAR GAMES & INSPIRATION

For similar games we looked at games such as: **Limbo**, **Ori and the Blind Forest** and **Child of Light** regarding art inspiration. We also looked at **Limbo** regarding gameplay mechanics as well as looking at **Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons**.

2.2.3 TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience of our game is neither **casual** nor **hardcore** gamers. Instead it is aimed towards the more **moderate** gamers that enjoy games such as **Flower** and **Journey** on the **PlayStation 4 (PS4)**.

2.2.4 PLATFORM(S)

Originally the game has been designed for the PS4, however because of licensing issues between NHTV, EPIC and Sony we are unable to build the game for this platform. Because of this we decided to build the game for PC though with PS4 controls in mind. It remains our intention to port it to PS4 if that option would become available to us.

2.2.5 GAME ENGINE

The game will be created using **Unreal Engine 4**.

2.2.6 GAME OBJECTIVE

The objective of the game is to use **two orbs** to guide a girl through a level and shield her from **darkness** and **dangers**.

2.2.7 UNIQUE SELLING POINT

The player has to protect and guide a character but cannot directly control her. Instead they control two orbs simultaneously, one of which is able to guide the girl and pull objects towards it and the other is able to repel enemies and push objects away from it.

2.3 GAME WORLD

2.3.1 STORY WORLD & NARRATIVE

The game is set in a **shadowy world** between life and death; neither heaven or hell, nor quite the ordinary world. Within this setting a little girl trying to pass from one world to the next is lost and must be aided to not be overcome by darkness.

The world is a mix of a **forest** and **cave** environment fused with happy memories of the child, taking form of a **theme park**. The world does not necessarily adhere to the rules of the normal world with regard to logic.

Certain **safe places** in world, represented lit areas illuminated by **lanterns**, are found here and there which provide temporary safe havens to the girl, and a place where they return when nearly overcome by the darkness. **Child drawings**, put there by previous passengers, mark these spots as well, further emphasizing the safe nature of these spots.

2.3.2 PLAYER REPRESENTATION

The player is represented by the two orbs. These orbs, **emanating a protective energy aura** (light, as in light v darkness), are linked to the girl – they can be seen as sort of guardian spirits guiding the girl through the deceptive environment. They can **manipulate** the world by materializing their energies in **attracting** and **repelling** effect; ‘push’ and ‘pull’.

2.4 GAMEPLAY

2.4.1 MAIN MECHANICS

The player controls two orbs: one of them can push, the other can pull. This way the player is able to interact with the environment.

2.4.2 CAMERA

The camera will follow the two orbs which the player controls, however the child is the anchor, meaning that the orbs will never be able to leave the child alone.

2.4.3 KEEPING THE CHILD SAFE

The player needs to keep the child at all times either in safe areas or while guided by the player. These safe areas serve as checkpoints. If the child is not safe then she will become scared and will run back to the nearest safe area. Once this happens all puzzles are reset from the safe area onwards.

2.4.4 CONFLICTS

There are several dangers for which the player has to look out and most of which are environment based:

- Objects that hit the girl at high velocity (such as crates and boulders) will scare the girl and she will be reset back to the nearest safe area.
- Some gaps the girl cannot jump and once she falls she will be reset to the nearest safe area.
- In certain areas enemy shadows will spawn. If this shadow gets too close to the child than she will become scared and run back to the safe area.

2.4.5 PUZZLES

Each level will have a various of sets of puzzles which need to be solved in order to progress towards the level finish. These puzzles require the push and pull mechanics of the orb in order to solve them.

3 GAME SYSTEMS & MECHANICS

3.1 IN-GAME CONTROL SYSTEM

3.1.1 ORB MOVEMENT

The player is able to directly move the orbs simultaneously in the game. The left analog stick controls the blue orb which is called the *Attractor Orb* and the right analog stick controls the orange orb which is called the *Repeller Orb*.

The orbs will have collision with the environment and the player has to navigate the orbs through the game.

3.1.2 CHARACTER MOVEMENT

The player is able to guide the child around using the *Attractor orb* by pressing and holding the L1 button when the orb is near the child. The child will then be linked to the orb and will try and follow it. This link will however brake if the orb is too far from the child.

3.1.3 PULL / PUSH

The player is able to manipulate certain objects in the world directly or indirectly using the pull and/or push mechanic of the orb. The player is for example able to push a lever down or pull a cube on a button which will open a gate.

3.1.4 REPEL SHADOW ENEMIES

The player is able to repel shadow enemies that spawn with the *Repeller orb*. This is done by rapidly tapping the R1 button when closed to the enemy. The health of the enemy (indicated by the intensity of a vignette) will go down and it will be pushed a bit back after each tap. However the lower the enemy health is the faster its health recovers. Meaning that it becomes harder to defeat the enemy the closer it is to defeat.

3.2 FEEDBACK SYSTEMS

3.2.1 VISUAL

Visual feedback will be provided by mostly either animation or particle effects.

3.2.2 AUDIO

In most cases audio feedback will be given in a more abstract way using instruments rather than sounds that simulate "real world" audio. Examples of this are piano notes on each footstep of the child.

Furthermore the child character will make childlike noises to give feedback (e.g. crying when scared and amazed when following the orb).

3.2.3 HAPTIC

Haptic feedback will be given while fighting off the enemy.

4 APPENDIX

4.1 KNOWN ISSUES

Many issues are known regarding level design. These issues arisen mostly when art was integrated in the whitebox levels. Because of a lack of time not all of the issues where addressed meaning that in some situations the player could break the game by for example getting a box stuck behind geometry.