

Caretaker of Maldearg Portfolio

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Development Diary

Week 1

- We met to brainstorm ideas for game, using a list of job-based concepts.
- We narrowed it down to three main ideas for further development:
 - A farming game where a demonic entity affects crops giving them a demonic appearance.
 - A waste management game set in a fantasy world, where players sort and collect trash, occasionally finding magical items that change gameplay.
 - An isometric horror game where the player is a caretaker exploring a mad scientist's manor, using cleaning tools to progress.
- After a vote, we decided to develop the isometric horror game.

Week 2

- In the Ideation stage, a floor plan for the mansion was created to help the team understand the general layout.
- The design was inspired by real life manors like the Winchester Manor.
- The floor plan included two sections.
- The floor plan was created using a website called Floorplanner.

Week 3

- Once the manor's floor plan was complete, a list of audio assets was prepared for the final build.
- Teammates suggested booking a recording room and microphone for capturing sound effects.
- The recording room and microphone were booked for Saturday.
- However, the recording session could not proceed due to unclear instructions on setting up the equipment.

Week 4

- After failing to record audio last week, raw sound effects were sourced from websites like Freesound.org and Pixelbay.
- The sound effects were edited in Audacity to achieve the desired result.
- Following the audio work, me and Jay collaborated to create a sketch of the scientist's secret lab.
- The sketch was reviewed by the artists to ensure they could create the necessary assets for the lab.
- Me and Jay also worked on creating a sketch for a maze level structure that the player would explore.

Week 5

- Created a greybox of the maze level layout in Unreal Engine.
- It is designed to have three different paths for both the player and monster to run around in.
- Downloaded a modular kit made by one of our 3D artists that has early textures.
- Created the first few rooms of the maze layout using the modular kit.
- The rooms have a collision box that when the player leaves it fades out.

Week 6

- Almost done creating the maze level layout with the modular kit.

- Had an issue with the collision boxes for when the rooms fade out that the programmers are currently working to fix.

Week 7

- Completed the maze level layout with the modular kit.
- Implementing early 3D assets and textures into Unreal.
- Programmer wanted us to add black planes to the rooms to make sure the rooms fade out properly.

Week 8

- Continued to add more 3D assets into the level.
- Created/sourced more sound effects to use in the level and main menu (footsteps, sigil breaking, spray, etc).
- Gained feedback during play party one of which regarding how the rooms are too big.

Week 9

- Me, Jay, and Josh worked on creating a new, smaller layout for the level.
- The new level was to be our final revision as we were running out of time for development.
- Used only a few rooms that were in the previous level to make the new one.
- Implemented new assets and textures onto the level.

Week 10

- Sketched and built a room with a growth maze that hurts the player when touched.
- Changed the footsteps audio by:
 - Making the footsteps separate audio files.
 - Changed the effects to make the footsteps for the monster.
- Me and Jay booked a recording room and microphone to record voice lines for the audio logs.
- After recording, the voice lines were edited in Audacity to make it sound like its playing from a recording tape.

Week 11

- Made variations of existing sound effects:
 - Door open/close
 - Caretaker footsteps
 - Monster footsteps
- Added the last few sound effects into the level (Type writer, Lady Screaming, Leaves Rustling)
- Created a rough storyboard for the teaser trailer.

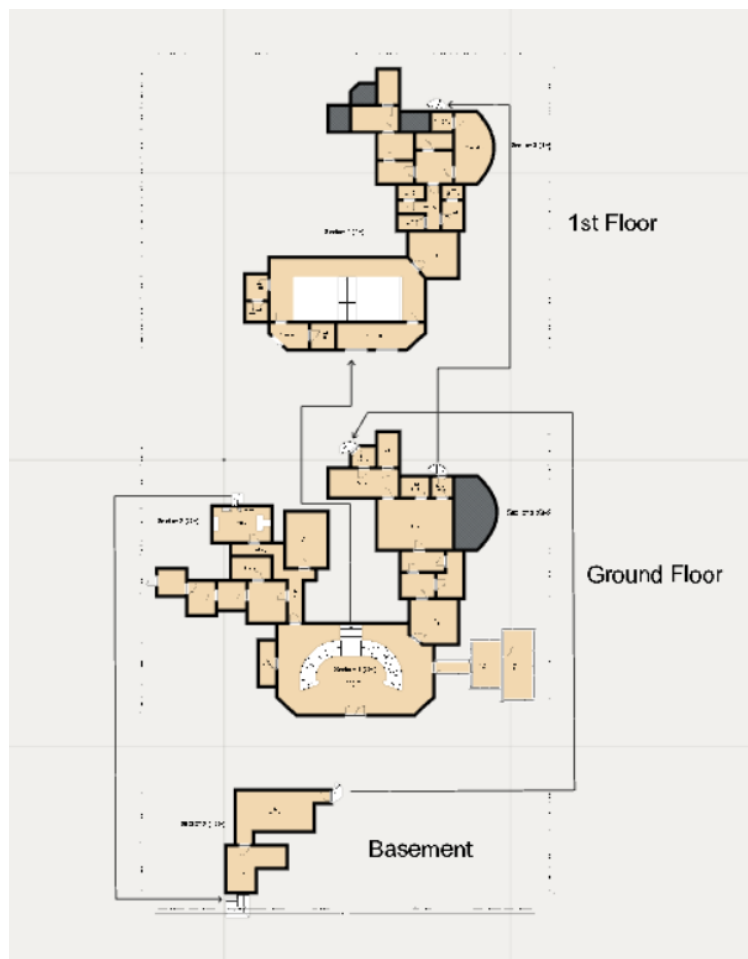
Week 12

- Edited and sent to Producer to upload the video to YouTube to be used in our Itch page.

Reflective Essay

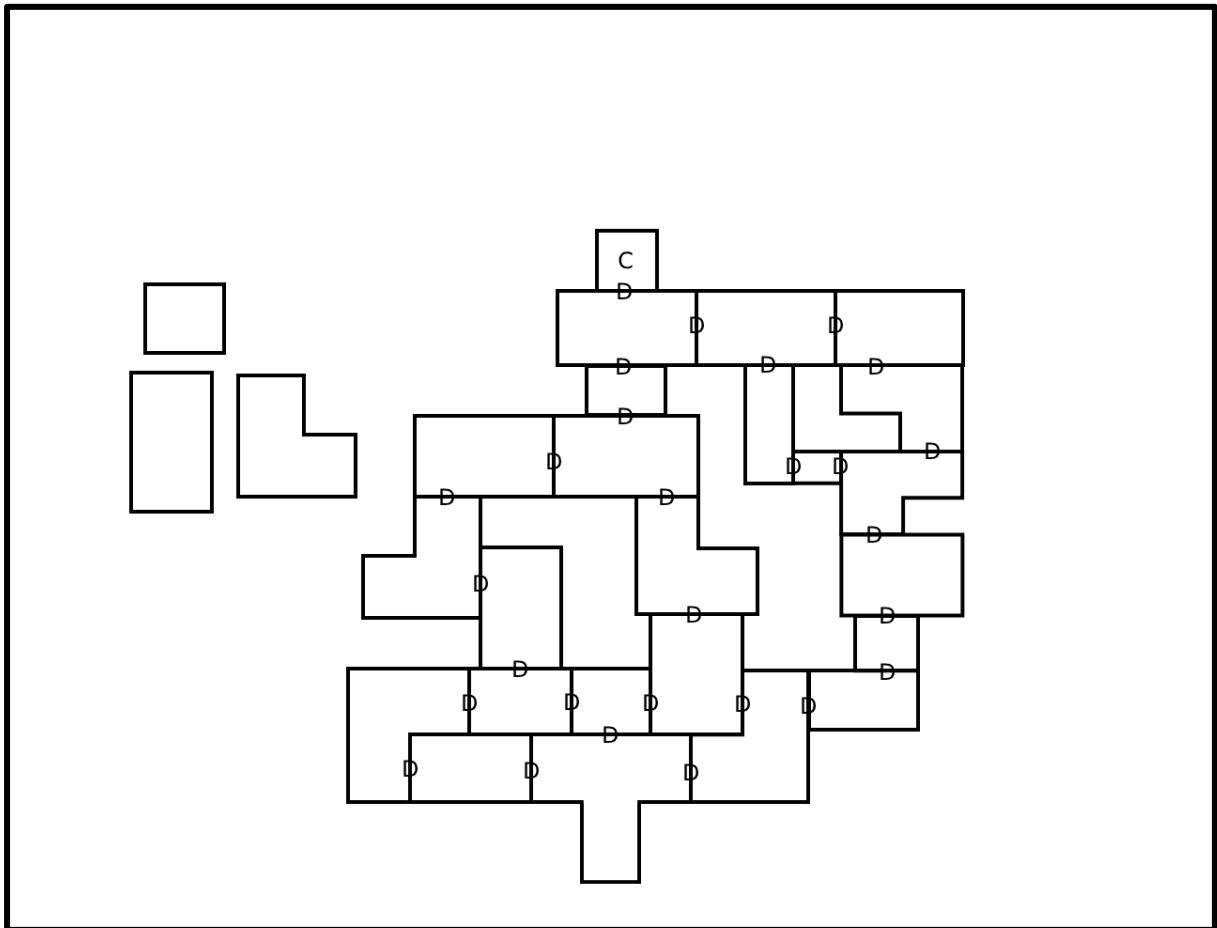
I am Mazen Khalifa, and I am the level and audio designer for Assailance Games. The game the me and the group made is called Caretaker of Maldearg, an isometric horror game where you play as a caretaker trying to escape the manor using cleaning tools whilst avoiding a monster trying to kill you. How this idea came about was that we were tasked with creating a game based the theme 'A Twist on the Mundane' so we wrote a list of jobs that are mundane and scenarios that would make the job more interesting. In this case, we landed on the main character being janitor/cleaner and the scenario being that they are stuck in a haunted mansion and must use their cleaning tool to progress.

During the ideation phase of our project, I did not have a good idea of which part of the mansion the vertical slice would take place. So, I attempted to create a floor plan of the entire mansion to use as a base for when I start designing the actual level. I used real life mansions as a reference and made sure to show the floor plan to the 3D artists since they would have to populate the room with furniture and other stuff. One of my personal goals for this project and term two in general is to try communicating more as it is an important skill to have in the games industry. Once I made a good portion of the manor floor plan, I worked with Jay (who was also a Level Designer) to create a level layout where the vertical slice would take place. Coming out of the ideation phase, one thing that I wished I had done differently was creating a greybox level for the player to move around in. It would have been a good way display the early stages of our game during the first play party and make it look like it could have potential.

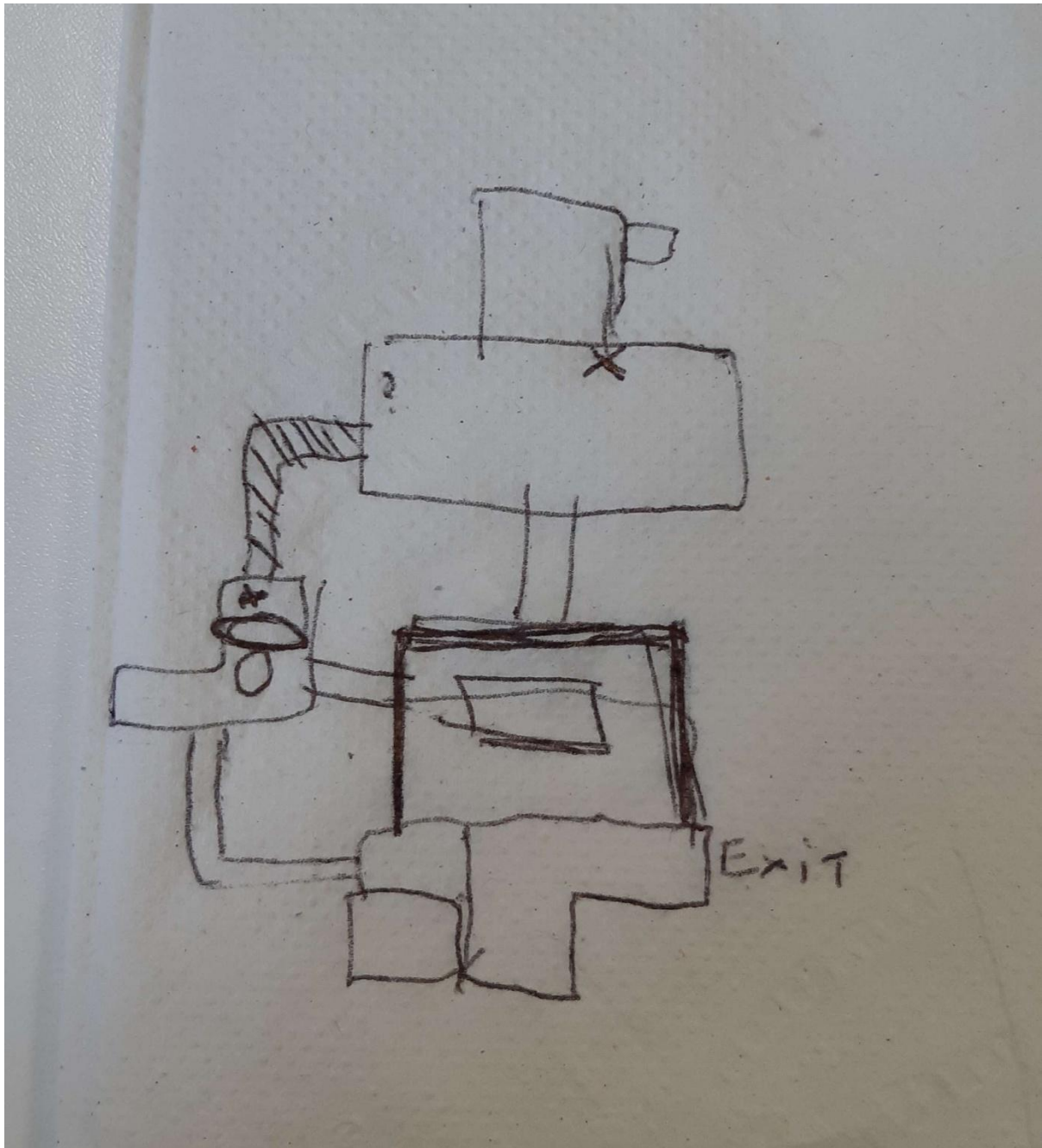


My Floorplan for the manor

In the development phase of the project, I was fully focused on building the early design of the level layout. Since our group's first play party was not a successful due to their being no level for player to walk around, Me and Jay went to work on building the level based on the sketch I made and later added the assets from a modular kit that one of our 3D artists made. It was nice to have a team member to work along with cause it allowed to focus my effort on making sure the level works well and get different perspective on how they do level design. In between level building, I also created/sourced sound effects that would be used in the later versions of the game. I have been told that it would be a bit early for me to create/source sound effects, but I figured if I get a good chunk of it done then I can put more focus into developing the level further.



Level Layout sketch created by me



Rough Sketch of Final Layout

However, when we presented our game to our clients, they said that the level was too big, and it would take a long time to get from one room to another and make it difficult for the 3D artist to populate them with assets. The clients did tell us that over scope happens a lot when making a new game, so it made me less worried about the actual level layout. But even when me and Jay decreased the size of the rooms, we still got complaints about the level being too big. It had gotten to the point where before the second play party, we had cut a huge section of the level because players keep getting lost. We knew we had to completely redesign the layout, but I felt a bit disappointed with the feedback from my previous level layouts that I let Jay draw the new one. I still helped by giving suggestions but after that Jay was the one who built the level that was used in our beta version while I kept working on audio side of things. I still did well when it came to audio since it is an important part of horror games, and it gave me a chance to improve my audio design skills.

But even then, I wish that I could have done more to help with making new level layout after it was drawn up because audio was all done, I did not have anything to do and was worried that making changes to the level could negatively impact the game. Despite that, I made the most of my time as an audio designer and did my best to make the game atmospheric and I did a good job at it. I believe that because when I was showcasing our game in the Offer Holder Event, I saw the people playing it getting jumpscared because of the sounds the monster made as well as the scream sound effect the plays when they get caught.

Overall, I have had a wonderful time working on Caretaker of Maldearg and it was fun doing it alongside my teammates over the course of three months. Being part of this project has allowed me to improve on my skills in games development and communicating with team members. It has also given me insight into what I would have to do better to make in the industry like improving my level design skills which I thought I was quite good at and picking up a skill that I have rarely used like audio design.