Critical Appraisal

This project was an opportunity to create and fully developed an immersive experience while collaborating with students from a different course. It is always very inspiring to work with different subjects and merge their knowledge with our own to create something meaningful. This time we got a chance to collaborate with students from the Sound Arts course. Therefore, groups were created to include both Virtual Reality and Sound Art students. Our group was composed of 7 people. Jason and I, together with Hanrui Zhang, Si Ting Wang, Ties Linssen, Harvey Young, and Bohang Zhang. The role distribution amongst both courses was fairly simple. Sound art students would create all audio for the experience while Jason and I built the scenes and created the mechanics for the virtual artefact. In our first meeting, we set all these goals very clearly, and not only distributed tasks but also started to think of a unique concept for our piece.

Therefore, after intense discussion, our group chose to create an immersive VR horror game that challenged anyone brave enough to play it. Our concept revolved around phobias, getting players to face them and successfully finish the while being scared to bits. A straightforward concept, despite its questionable goals. We ended up using some of the most common phobias as they would be relatable to most people and could get the best reactions. Acrophobia (fear of heights), Coulrophobia (fear of clowns) and claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces). These paired with an intense nightmare-like plot, were certainly a recipe for demoniac success. In my view, the concept was very intriguing and unique enough to create a lasting impact on people. As humans, we tend to be struck by extreme emotions, fear, sadness, love, and anger. I think by choosing horror as our focus we were able to connect more with the audience as well.

The making of this game was an extremely strenuous and long process that required a lot of patience and willingness to research to get unique results. I think that was the minimum expected from us for the time we were given. Jason and I were paired up together to take responsibility for this role throughout the entire project. We did everything from asset selection to building the scenes, creating the code, and even making audio clips for the game. In terms of software, we also didn't simply stick to unity. We also use blender, unreal engine, illustrator, and Photoshop, amongst others. I think we did a very good job creating the scenes and setting the atmosphere for this horrific game. Nonetheless, the coding process was a huge challenge at times due to its complexity and our urge to tackle new challenges. But I think I can speak for both of us when I say that we are content with the results.

There are certainly a couple of things I would like to change and explore further if I had more time. Mainly adding more visual effects and developing the sound a bit more as well. All to create a more cohesive and immersive experience. Furthermore, I would also like to explore other mechanics within the game, such as a life-based experience where the player has a limited amount of lives to finish the game. On the other hand, there is also more room for interaction with the environment around the player. Finally, the clown scene could also use a bit of polishing, and the feedback system could also be further perfected.

Regarding the collaboration, communication was mainly done through apps like WhatsApp and Teams. Whereas the assets sharing was done via OneDrive, where we kept each other updated and shared all the crucial files used for the immersive experience. Overall, we were good at communicating, and I would set weekly meetings for everyone to share their progress and give suggestions. In the beginning, we even set a calendar and the goals we wanted to accomplish by specific dates. Furthermore, there was so much enthusiasm in the first few weeks that they even helped with writing the script and offered to help with the 3D assets.

Nonetheless, I must acknowledge the shortcomings of this collaboration. As I've mentioned before, it was an amazing chance to work with people with different skills than us. It was marvellous to listen to their work and witness their initial drive to make this project great. Sadly, I think that started to slowly fade away, and it is with great pity that I say this, but I expected more from them. We did receive some files in the beginning, but their work rhythm slowly stagnated, and despite my sending video files and audio lists for them to use as reference, we ended up short in sound clips for the main scenes. As a result, I had to figure out a way to make up for the lack of audio files, and not only resorted to free sound platforms but even created some of the clips myself through free websites and recordings on my phone. This caused a considerable imbalance in workload, and even though it was not my responsibility, the sound elements were too important to be ignored.

Regarding working with Jason, I think we are very different people with different work approaches and habits. But I think he was more excited about this project and wanted to do more. He did participate, and I think I was able to take him out of his comfort zone a little, but I still took over the main file and general planning of the experience.

In conclusion, I am very happy with the results we were able to get from this project, but the general goal of the collaboration was not successful. But when facing adversity, the only way to produce something good is to trust our abilities and do our best despite the challenges. Ultimately, we created something that definitely caught people's attention, and we are so grateful for all the helpful feedback and ideas that we got from our peers and tutors. Even if the collaboration wasn't good, I accomplished what I set out to do, and I am proud of it.