ASTRO ODYSSEY – BEYOND THE LIMITS OF PHYSICAL SPACE

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As emerging technologies begin to infiltrate our lives, the paradigm shift is starting to feel inevitable and the need to explore and experience these pioneering mediums feels increasingly like a plausible reality. This could create new possibilities for the educational field, where the methods and curriculum are being revolutionized to meet the needs of a progressively more technology-based society. As a result, I intend to explore this potential through my final major project, by creating a cutting-edge Virtual Reality (VR) cinematic experience, which seeks to challenge the traditional educational environments and explore new teaching methods within the metaverse.

Astro Odyssey (working title) is a VR educational cinematic immersive experience that encompasses the wonders of space exploration and provides the viewer with but a taste of the celestial bodies in our universe. This theme is especially suited for my project since space exploration is quite an inaccessible experience to most human beings. Therefore, it can also be the most enticing and mesmerizing to the average viewer, providing them with an otherwise exclusive scenario that they get to embark and explore in a highly realistic immersive adventure.

The narrative begins with the viewer being spawned in a traditional-looking classroom with a similarly normal-looking teacher, where they will be introduced to the experience's theme and goals. Following this, the student will be transported to a spaceship-like environment in space, where the human teacher will also be replaced by a robot, contrasting the previous scene and its paradigm-led educational methods. Furthermore, this scene will also function as a main menu where the viewer will be able to select one of three pre-recorded lectures. Mars exploration, the solar system and black holes will be the options available to the viewer throughout the cinematic experience. Once one is selected, the student will be taken to that environment, together with the teacher, who will be guiding them through the content of each lesson/scene. At the same time, in each scene, the viewer will be given access to interactable UI that will serve as a tool to complement the narrative by presenting them with curriculum

content, image folders, and data visualisation, to name a few. Once every scene has been played the student will be able to quit the spaceship scene and be taken to a scene on Earth where the narrative will be neatly wrapped up and the experience reset.

This project is aimed towards all users above the ages of 10, as per Meta's safety and age restrictions. However, I want to focus this project on the impact of such approaches on teenager students and how VR cinematic-based experiences may or may not enhance the current educational practices and viewer focus, in accordance with my thesis.

In conclusion, my final major project will explore the untapped potential within VR and push its current capabilities and take the viewer through a trip of both fascinating knowledge and hypnotising environments. By bridging the gap between the education and the imaginary/impossible experiences, I aspire to cultivate the seeking of knowledge in the minds of students, while also providing them with a first-hand experience of the learning opportunities in the metaverse.