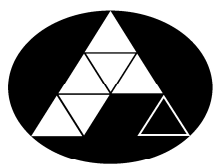


NORTH KARELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
Degree Programme in Industrial Design

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Europa – Dark Game Design

Thesis
February 2012



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Tiivistelmä

Opinnäytetyöni aiheena on Grit Studiolle tekemäni toiminnallinen jakso, jonka aikana suunnittelin peliprojektiin nimeltä Europa visuaalista ilmettä ja tyyliä. Tehtävänä oli ideoida pelin sisällä olevaa maailmaa yhdessä pelisuunnittelija, yrittäjä Jonne Ojennuksen kanssa, ja visualisoida näkemyksemme kaksiulotteiseen muotoon.

Pyrin opinnäytetyössäni kehittämään aiemmalta harrastuspohjaltani ammatillisempaan asemaan pelisuunnittelussa. Tavoitteena oli hyödyntää parhaalla mahdollisella tavalla visuaalisia taitojani, joita teollisen muotoilun koulutuksessa olen kartuttanut.

Käyn läpi pelin ainutlaatuisia asetelmaa, miljöötä sekä teknisiä ratkaisuja, joita kehitimme tehdäksemme projektista mahdollisesti houkuttelevan investoinnin rahoittajalle, ja myös kuluttajalle.

Selvitän myös Europan edustamaa cyberpunk-genreä lyhyesti, kuinka se on kehittynyt alkuperäisestä muodostaan, ja mitkä sen osa-alueet eritoten vaikuttivat pelin syntyyn ja sen nykyiseen muotoon.

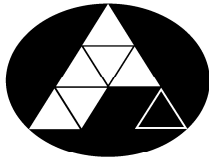
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Europa – Dark Game Design

Abstract

The subject of my thesis was a game project called Europa, which I helped put into motion during my internship at Grit Studio Ltd. My commission was to compose a world inside the game together with the designer and entrepreneur Mr Jonne Ojennus, then to sketch 2D-renditions of the developed ideas.

The aim of this thesis was to develop myself from being a mere amateur to a serious concept designer for the gaming industry while utilizing the visual skills I have garnered from, for instance, my degree programme training as an industrial designer.

This thesis aims at uncovering the world of Europa for a casual viewer - its setting and milieu in full detail but, in addition, some particular technical game play solutions developed for adding the interest of potential producers and future players.

Another topic touched on in this thesis is the dystopian setting of the cyberpunk flavor, which Europa loosely represents. In other words, how this particular subgenre of science fiction came into existence, how it has evolved and how it has influenced the birth and development of Europa.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Finnish gaming industry has recently been gathering fame and fortune in the tabloids. Talks of it being the boost Finnish economy has been craving for are not wholly exaggerated. Allegedly, the labor force exists for such an industry, along with the interest and imagination needed to create original games. I personally have long had the feeling that I should immerse myself in this cause, and to pool all my abilities to become a professional in the trade of concept designer for games. After some scrounging, an opportunity presented itself, and the terms were of favorable nature.

Last spring, I fell under the sway of Mr. Jonne Ojennus, a gentleman and a scholar of excellent address. Mr Ojennus manages a commendable enterprise in the city of Outokumpu, with the development of games close to his heart. While I was endowed with an apprenticeship in his firm, we found that we had many opinions in common; but mostly, we happened to venerate the same virtues in our shared hobby: gaming. This activity is heavily present in Outokumpu, since Grit Studio, Ojennus' firm is sustained by a business incubator itself.

Sometime after the spring's initial engagement I was approached by Ojennus to make a comeback and, once again, enlist myself with his house of talent. He had this mad vision of a game never seen before, and the project lacked a concept designer. Historically, those foolish enough to accept such invitations suffer for their boldness. Nevertheless, I took the risk upon myself, though this time toiling for my imminent thesis project.

Ojennus' idea was to design a cyberpunk-themed shooter game and reap commercial advantage. This in no manner sounded unique, but there was much room for development at least, and I readily accepted to help design this project. If Ojennus esteems me a person of sufficient finesse to give life to a world of this manner, who am I to doubt his beliefs? As the matter of fact, I felt as though the industrial design training that I had received for four consecutive years had all been leading me towards this certain path. So many skills I had

garnered among my studies were of help while designing a whole world for this purpose.

In this thesis I will explain the process of my concept design and the general contemplation during the process, as well as unravel my thoughts on the two months of working time I spent with the folk at Grit Studio; my primary chores being general ideation of the world and the conceptualization of Ojennus' vague ideas by the manner of a drawing tablet and Photoshop software, though more often we had to settle for the rendition of my own assumption of the ideas presented, since few details made themselves present.

2 MOTIVATION AND FRAME OF REFERENCE

2.1. Motivation

As I see it, the distinctive features of my person are my passion for the uncanny and the fantastic substance and the skill to bring such things to life through art. This poses an interesting dilemma: how to create income from the mentioned trait, while maintaining the continuance of motivation?

An industrial designer is commonly thought of as a single gear of a callous machine that excretes various household items and furniture. When working for Grit Studio last spring, I found that I could also be a gear, though for an unlikely, yet not so unlike kind of a machine. The field of game design has held my interest for a long while; in fact the game concept designer's livelihood was the chief motivator of my choice of study, after discovering many of my preferable artists were in fact industrial designers by trade. Thankfully, mastering the creation of form and function, as well as the expertise in the aesthetics are essential in the line of concept design, as even the imaginative world must have limitations and rules to be deemed plausible and thus credible.

I have come into the conclusion that I should engage myself in only such occupations which involve intellectual interplay of the manner I favor. Going against one's nature is sometimes necessary to achieve your goals, but doing the opposite at least generates honest interest and thus fulfills your ambitions. The two sides of the concept designer coin are the freedom of creation but, also, the necessary limitations one must enforce, be they your own preferences or the client's.

I must further comment on my personal views in the decision of the subject: since my childhood, games have been one of my more distinguishable past-time activities, digital and traditional alike. In this regard, the opportunity I was offered by Grit Studio was indissmissible, though to be fair, I had doubts wheth-

er such a project would suit as the paradigm of my proficiency. In retrospect, it is the only real option that simultaneously demonstrates it, but also manages to motivate me and in so doing, bring out the best in me. Not to belittle designers of furniture and other indispensable accessories, my own sense of purpose lies here - in the creation of the unthinkable, the illustration of the otherworldly.

As was initially agreed, I would take the lead of the visual art department of Europa, but, also, the world design aspect needed. As I understood it, many of the studio's regular workers were tied in on certain mobile game development projects, so only a handful could be placed to work on Europa at the time. Mr Jonne Ojennus was the leading 3D-designer, and the game- and world designer as well; I was primarily in charge of the world's content shaped itself, but took also lead on the visual aspects, and then Ms Anu Malm, an illustrator and 3D-sculptor contributed logo designs for our companies.

As the chief concept designer for Europa, I was in a unique position to affect something that paid tribute to my own enthusiasm, but in addition, to hone my skills as a professional. Now, even though I may exceedingly appraise my condition, the task was in no way a cakewalk. Once my works became subject to the full force of evaluation, they may have been received coolly, demanded to be altered or even wholly disregarded, as per the natural process of any kind of a designer product.

2.2. Frame of reference

The frame of reference (Picture 1) for the process attempts to shed light to how my personal interests, along with the skills acquired during my studies, in conjunction with the interests and views of my colleagues at Grit Studio, impacted the final product. What should also be present is how I advanced from mere industrial designer mindset into the current, broader one, capable of entering a project demanding great deal of both skill and style.



Picture 1. Visual frame of reference.

3 CYBERPUNK

I feel it is necessary to explain what constitutes to the use of the word 'cyberpunk' for any reader who might not be familiar with the term, since it is such a large and thoughtful concept to be covered wholly in a glossary. There is a general consensus of the meaning, of course, but in truth the visions vary significantly, however the basic essence that is present in all cases considered cyberpunk is the whisper of the dark aspect lurking inside each of us. It is the stygian presumption that mankind will eventually (if it has, indeed, not already) plunge from the right path into the devastating darkness that is only a careless misstep away.

As Stephen Graham puts it in the *Cybercities Reader*: "Cyberpunk novels offer bleak portrayals of ultra-technologised urban life in a near-future world where globalisation, commodification and corporate control have accelerated immeasurably. They are replete with cyborg 'posthumans', absolute surveillance, invasive bio and molecular engineering, and immersive virtual realities which blend seamlessly into 'real' urban landscapes".

Truly, there is no end to the nightmares dystopian authors can conjure from our current situation: Corporate superpowers, indifferent to the blight of their people, will assume control if not governmentally restricted or civilly resisted; Machines will come to rule man in their stead; A complete anarchy will prevail as the social structure of our whole society collapses in its inefficiency. What makes this more plausible is the realization that no one unit is steering the ever-expanding technological breakthrough that humanity is undergoing even as I write this.

Aside from technology, as many as there are people in the world, there are ideologies, and ideologies will forever wage war against each other. Even for an individual, there is no certain set of rules to adhere to, nothing to confine the greed and gluttony that modern commerce represents, so why should we dare presume it of faceless entities, possibly completely devoid of pity, ethics or humanity, being slaves to the demand of profit? It seems more likely to presume

the exact opposite, since it would need nothing short of a revolution of values for mankind to embrace a desirable future for itself. Though, as values differ so drastically, some people might find a cyberpunk future for their liking, since it also presents a freedom of the individual in a way never seen before in our time. Regardless, the key features in cyberpunk are conflicting content such as to the oppression of the majority for the gain of the few, misplaced morals and the homogenous mechanization of mankind, and these things are often thought of as rather unpleasant, thus the dystopian label (Wikipedia 2012c).

Technology plays a major role in cyberpunk in particular. As the word itself hints to, one key flavor associated with cyberpunk is the blending of man and machine (a “cyborg” is a human who has been fit with invasive implants to enhance his performance in some way), the approaching singularity of machine consciousness and what may be the next step in mankind’s evolution. In this case, at odds are natural evolution and transhumanism (a philosophy where an individual deems it favorable to better his physical body with manmade alterations). This is where the line between man and machine dims too, and one may begin to wonder: what is a man but a biological machine? Is there such thing as a free will? If you create an android that is an exact replica of a human being, does it have human rights? Why should it? It is only a machine. Another technological aspect prominent is the control of perception. When there might exist a world that is indistinguishable from reality, but that is not clinically real, how can one tell when he is dreaming and when he is not? Does it even matter, since reality is such a subjective concept anyway? Technological virtual realities are fairly common in cyberpunk environments, if not core content, but they differ from our current internet in the way that a person can submerge wholly inside the cyber world even to the point of no longer being able to discern the cyber world from reality.

Corporations and governments also attempt to control an individual’s perception via propaganda, chemical substances or even brainwashing. There is nothing uncommon in people oppressing people. It seems almost natural to us, even how twisted it might be.

To sum it up: science and technology are often assumed to be our saviors, but they could as well become tools of exploitation instead. Lifesaving innovations, for the sake of profit, often become subject to artificial scarcity, even to the point of losing lives over the covetous regulations of corporations. This not only concerns medical technology, but the demand of nourishment as well. Even today, surplus food is disposed of rather than distributed free of charge to the needy. There is no sense in this and the visions cyberpunk literature and cinema try to convey is the madness in which money and the obsession of possession have engulfed us in, or rather, will eventually do so. Even in its foreboding message cyberpunk tells us we still have time. The dystopias, they need not come to be, though as far as they go, literature, cinema and games are only entertainment. Whether they are taken as serious admonitions or just past time activity is left to the viewer, who may immerse safely with these Medias into the sinister fantasy he is presented with.

To me, cyberpunk has always been about the rebellion against the defunct dogma, against the oppression of the people and against the injustice of a morally corrupt system. The key feature however is the greyness of any sort of moral creed and the ambiguity of truth and justice, and this is exactly what makes cyberpunk such an intriguing subject. As to my contribution to the genre, in Europa I seek to visually convey these kinds of mixed feelings of a mankind lost in its way, not only by way of architecture, character design and game design, but in the whole outlook of the dismal city.

In truth, I often wonder if symbolism and such subconscious spiritual guidance is even noted or realized amongst the endless flow that is contemporary recreational activity. I have never heard talk of it, though one may assume it is so obvious it need not even be pointed out. You become what you feel is yours, what fits you as a person. I dislike preaching, as I believe that defeats the point of individual development, and instead substitutes it with guilt and a threat of consequence, which in turn begets opposition. We are all bad people, no doubt, you need only ask the wrong person, yet no amount of preaching will change that. What little human progress we make can truly only come from free will to change, and the realization of the err in our ways.

The following movies and literature works are widely recognized as the key pieces in Cyberpunk, and will further familiarize the reader on the theme: *The Matrix* and *The Blade Runner* by Warner Bros. Pictures, *Neuromancer* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* by William Gibson.

4 PROJECT

4.1. Primary ideas

The structure of our designing process was the following: choosing the setting, contriving raw ideas, forming the surroundings, creating the atmosphere and finally sculpting the details. When explained like this, the game becomes a mere product like anything else an industrial designer might create. The function of the product here is purely recreational, but how to arrive to the point where multimedia becomes entertaining is a more complex issue. On gut-feeling, and our personal experiences as gamers we started working without too much pressure towards the goal that would amuse us, and hopefully anyone else immersing in the world we were about to create. The project, like projects often do, started with a dream. This particular one was Ojennus' desire to let loose his vision upon the world by the manner of the most jocular activity feasible: video gaming. The details were at this point highly uncertain, which is understandable, yet the general direction which Europa was to be headed towards basked in clarity: a cyberpunk setting.

When this basic setting upon where we started to pour our ideas was decided, next followed a series of rousing meetings with the team; held every day at noon, where we discussed features each of us would like to see in Europa. Though I prefer single-player games myself, it soon became apparent that embarking on such an endeavor as to create a single-player role-playing game would be a financially dubious stunt - almost fatalistic, if Ojennus was to be believed. Much and more profitable seemed the prospect of popular approach via the multiplayer environment, where gamers are digitally introduced to each other; engaging in rivalry or camaraderie, depending on which faction you choose to join. The presence of these kinds of factions serves to offer a purpose, something to achieve for the player as he climbs in ranks within his particular order.

Europa is set in an enormous city-like megalopolis with the same name. This was Ojennus' inspiration, as he had in a previous, though unfinished project

composed a fictional world chronologically anterior to the one represented in Europa. The central city, Europa is the last vestige of humanity known, while every other place on Earth rendered unsuitable for human life, or deserted for lack of resources or warmth, since the planet has lapsed into an ice-age of both nature and human spirit. Such a setting seems dreadful at first glance. That exactly is the essence of dystopian settings. I personally believe they are natural reflections of our fears, of our expectations and good intentions going horribly astray in the future. As such they carry a powerful admonition, provided they are conveyed with believable realistic touch.

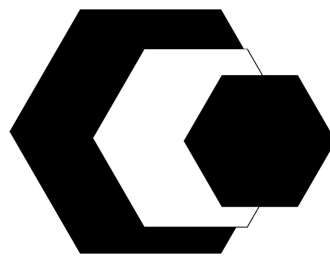
Since one of the most controversial quiddity in cyberpunk is the existence of mega-corporations of insane volume, a feature that was to be implemented in the initial draft was a set of families, though not in the most traditional sense. We came up with this idea of highly evolved companies, in their present state representing immense societies, almost to the point of being whole cultures, defined by their forefathers' professions. Each would govern a force distinct of the other. One would wield all of the city's electricity, another the entirety of the agriculture and recycling of waste, while another would be in control of all the recreational facilities and services. These are merely rough examples, but as such prove to illustrate the basic gist and motivator in Europa: feudal warfare between these centralized units of power. In a sense, this represents nationalism twisted to the extreme - where you not only serve a futile purpose, but you do it for nothing else than your particular corporation's triumph. This is a far leap from strict realism, but enhances the setting quite nicely.

While we conferred, it was agreed that I should commence working on the initial appearance of the main characters, as the player must start his way as an employee amongst the ranks of one of the mega-corporations. What better to illustrate a setting's visual configuration than the flamboyancy of its native people? As the milieu in question is essentially a science-fiction environment, it may be subject to a number of freedoms it otherwise would not. I wanted something definitely unique, and it had to be in line with the dystopian vibe, so alike so many others prior to me, I looked back. I found that the medieval dark ages has all that seemed to be in demand: the dismal overcast, the ludicrous vogue, the

fanatic rapture of faith, the desperation, the heraldic, and the avarice. I attempted to import such elements into my character and environment designs. It should be noted however, that at time of the very first drafts, this idea of medieval stylizing was only forming and under discussion still, so naturally the elements in question are more prominent in the subsequent paintings.

Obviously the companies were where to start sculpting this world, since they essentially represented the whole scenery, being dominant and omnipresent as they are. After coming up with sufficiently alien-sounding names for all the societies, I realized each of them would require an identity of some sort. I came up with four societies and presented them. Ojennus was satisfied with them, but he wanted to add one more, a familiar land- and mindscape - something for the player to identify with, since the others were a far cry from the familiarity of our world. Here are the societies as they were initially pictured, with the corresponding logos illustrated by Anu Malm:

Memnosyne (Picture 2): Represents force of violence and the flame of the old world. As a standard army-model stylizing, it did not need much work. Fearless and indomitable, they govern with extreme discipline and the possession of weaponry. A society such as this was Ojennus' preferred addition to the other four.



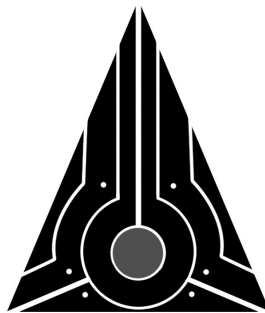
Picture 2. Memnosyne

Mai (Picture 3): Survival and the great cycle of life are Mai's central concerns. They represent hope and the seed of future, but the intolerance of hubris too. Mai holds the last knowledge of biology and agriculture. They grow all crops and maintain the circulation of waste and water in Europe.



Picture 3. Mai

Chasm (Picture 4): Taking their name from a huge chasm in the center of the city, the cyborg like *chasmites*, as they are called, create all electricity for Europa's needs, utilizing deep underground geothermal power plants. They also manufacture most of the equipment and machinery. The Chasm represents greed, cruelty and transhumanism.



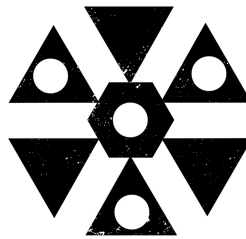
Picture 4. Chasm

Sivishe (Picture 5): Inter Sivishe is the epitome of hedonism in Europa. The anarchist members of this society are defined only by their current whim, engaging frequently in succulent gluttony and living amongst splendor. Sivishe influences the minds of the people by controlling the recreational services, the fashion and the pleasures. This society represents rapture, sloth and vanity.



Picture 5. Sivishe

Pastiche (Picture 6): The merchants, scholars and spies of Europa, the pasticheans hoard information, and then sell it for commodities or further information. Being expert theorists and mathematicians, they represent wisdom and domination, but corruption as well.



Picture 6. Pastiche

4.2. Game structure

At the discussions, there was talk of making Europa a role-playing game, commonly recognized as a game where the player is able to interact extensively with his surroundings and the development of his player character. This seemed the way to go, though being much more laborious than a one-ended game. The point of view would be first person-style, where you behold the world through the eyes of your avatar, as this found the most support amongst the team.

As for the aspect of gameplay and in regard to the potential marketing of Europa, the game would implement massive multiplayer gaming as default, even to the point of wholly omitting solo playing. This kind of a game would be the easiest and profitable to commercialize, I hear. As an artist, my input in such technical and economic matters is superficial at best.

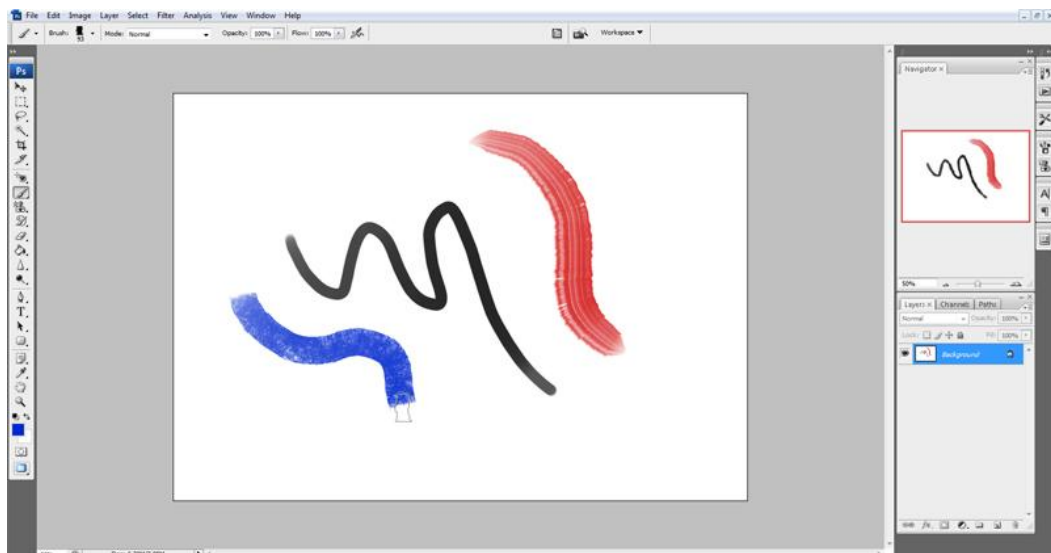
Europa is to be heavily combat-oriented, but to also include an inbuilt dialogue-system with which the players may engage in secret pacts, negotiate or merely just boast. This diplomacy medium elevates the gameplay from a simple hunt and kill -type configuration. Whether Europa should be played as a series of single missions or a world free roamed was left uncertain, though both have their pros and cons, obviously.

To give sufficient freedom to the player, he would be accustomed as an inter-society mercenary, an "Angel", with loyalties to the company of his choosing, but still at liberty to switch sides, if such an action would seem profitable or stimulating. As a gameplay notion, the insertion of the player into the role of his character, this soldier of fortune sets him in a position of relative neutrality from which to orientate oneself safely with his surroundings. As a more philosophical notion, the name these individuals associate themselves with is both a pop-culture reference and an ironic pun, for they are far from benevolent beings, as angelic creatures are commonly thought of as. Therein also lays a nod toward canonic continuation of man's spiritual evolution: In biblical lore, an angel is the messenger of god. In this case, the god is the company, and the angel is its harbinger, as man in his desire to serve some higher being, finding none above

turns to an entity (the company) created by him for veneration. When these crucial roles in regard to Europa's core content were relatively clear, I started to work on the atmospheric sketches that would give the world it's general feeling, and next presented are the techniques with which I worked on said drawings.

4.3. Techniques

Besides composing ideas, my secondary assignment was the visualization of these ideas on digital canvas (Picture 7) as they came. The manner which I work with is known as digital drawing or digital painting, whichever wording is preferred. This is understood as drawing by a digital drawing tablet on a computer, utilizing any program which allows the simulation of real-life conditions required for artistic rendition. It is in very few senses different to drawing on a paper with pencils, or painting with colors on a canvas. The main difference, as I see it, is that you do not have to reach for your raw materials every time you feel the need to draw, simply open the software and let yourself loose.



Picture 7. Adobe Photoshop with an open digital canvas.

At the studio, I was offered a dual-screened computer, and for the tool of trade there was a Wacom Intuos tablet, a notch bigger than what I am used to, and the customary Photoshop CS3 graphics editing software by Adobe Systems,

which I am familiar with. When the inspiration came while I was at home, I utilized my personal Wacom Bamboo tablet.

From the very beginning, I was urged to labor as swiftly as I could, which of course in turn meant that only moderate precision could be demanded of me. I found this a little bit troubling at first, since my style of drawing prefers a more focused approach. My chief issue here was that I seem to demand too much of the outcome of my work, even if asked to only perform a minor draft. I deliberately challenged myself to rid my mind of such inconveniences as the sort of arrogance I have previously been accustomed to. The end result may not be as spectacular as I had hoped for, but it is what I was able to do with the given time.

5 EUROPA

5.1. Of Europa

As was appointed, the key feature of the game would be the surrounding in which the story was presented. I was previously asked to formulate a cityscape in which five distinct companies would co-exist in relative peace, with a shallow unity and its laws. However, there had to be a group who would not be shackled by these restrictions, in which the player would be inserted. As I formulated various ideas, one in particular stood up: a troop called the Angels. The duties of these privileged individuals would be very varied. In some cases, they would act as spies for the primary societies to easily blend amongst the multitude of people simply by dressing as any of the other, carrying no identification nor proof of person, causing one to be wary of crossing his society in fear of retaliation. Sleeper agents, if you will. The dangers of covert operations are of course assimilation or corruption to name the most probable. The other objective of such an individual could be to enlist as an enforcer of the laws and ideals of his mother society. Of course this is commonly thought as the selection with the most action involved, but such distinction should of course be left to the player. One possible alternative would be to assume the position of a diplomat, to attempt to negotiate terms and solve issues in a nonviolent fashion. Technically, this sort of variation should provoke the player to experiment, and to find his favorable style of play, but as usual, there is a poorly hidden symbolic undertone even to this aspect too. The spy is neutral, and he takes no subjective viewpoint. He is the observer and the pretender. The enforcer is evil, who prefers to wreak havoc instead of promoting harmony. He is the offender and the aggressor. Last, but not least is the diplomat, who is the sole carrier of reason left in the ranks of the Angels. He is the defender, the polar opposite of the enforcer in both ideal and spirit. The choice of gameplay is ultimately the player's, a feature which is at least for me the most enjoyable prospect in games.

As for the city itself, I imagined it as an enormous, ancient megalopolis partly in state of rapid decay, but in some cases renovated to its former glory. The width

nor the range of the city should not be revealed, or such information should at least be very expensive to obtain and vague at best. The whole city should bask in mystery and foreboding overcast, with many aspects of it left unexplained. Maybe many dwellers of the city do not even know what lies beyond the colonization, which becomes more infrequent the further you journey from the city. The sky should be shrouded by motley clouds of pollution everywhere, to the point of most buildings having visual screens instead of windows. Inside these dwellings, the higher you climb, the more luxury and eccentricity you are to find. Huge unmanned maker-machines, programmed eons ago roam the outskirts of Europa, building things anew, their origin forgotten to all but few; Sleek spires of splendor dot the cityscape, where fortunate noble-folk dream inside webs of lies and illusions instead of living in the physical world; the confused youth either pressed by their society or depressed; most people having lost their common sense and all sensibility to seek a purpose other than ascending the ladder of their mother corporation. It is the ghost of the ancient world, with its citizens immersed so deeply into its metal, brick and plastic lie, they have no way out. The city does not have a beginning or an end, since there is no one to remember such frivolous details. Physically venturing farther from the center gets you nowhere, since there is nothing but empty halls, loneliness and darkness far from the heart. Spiritually, the city and its people represent a sort of afterlife of the whole human race, which persistently clings to the shadow of its old vitality, unbeknownst to its own looming extinction. This extinction might not be physical, but more of a death of the human soul, the innovativeness and the hope and desire of the advancement of mankind. Nothing is real, but least of all the truth, which you, as a player are offered five or possibly even more varying versions of.

When illustrating a city such as this, the darkness and contrasts between life and death and between good and evil should be posed in grey, colorless tones, for there is no clear path through Europa, there is only the mist of doubt and the certainty of the uncertain. Life, when encountered is wild, unpredictable and even perverse in some cases. When presenting or suggesting the strong presence of life, such as in the regions belonging to Sivishe, should even to some extent emphasize this aspect. Death, of course is ever present and impending,

but rarely seen or closely experienced. In such a city as Europa, one is bound to find various kinds of perversions, sleaze and filth: whatever mankind by-produces from existing amidst total leisure. The feeling of the masses should frequently range from euphoric mirth to nearing insanity. There should exist 'soft' and lively areas as well, which can be enhanced with architectural design. Chaotic detail is the trace of humanity, mixed with warm colors, whereas inhuman, robotic or commercial locations should have less detail and more hard, reflecting surfaces, sharpness, dynamicity and more functional designs, as if one were inside an enormous, undetermined machine of archaic and gothic flavor.

In contradiction to the present state of things, death in Europa is a different matter altogether, at least for the player. Death is rarely permanent for an Angel; since their memories are hooked to the collective subconscious, where they may be cloned anew in a similar body should they perish. This invokes a minor penalty of some sort of course, to discourage callous and reckless behavior in players, but is not in any way permanent. This is both a gameplay-technical solution to the problem of death in videogames, but a remainder of the lengths as well in which the human race has gone in search of immortality, only to find that it cannot rid itself of the need to obliterate everything it has strived for. Selling more cloning possibilities to desperate players in need of such is a potentially profitable prospect to the developer of the game, which is hard to ignore.

Another theme I have been toying with is insanity. Like the sun goes bright before its final death, so the human race gives its best before it plunges head first into the void. In Europa, you may encounter things connected to the desperation of the animalistic side of the human psyche. What follows when a living creature subconsciously realizes its closing death? It attempts to make such consequences which might lead to its demise impossible at any cost. Salvation of the body in technical form exists, but in a most humanlike way, it is expensive and as such available only for few. Your body is rescued by cloning it and restoring your previous memories, but is that really you? If you are cloned, are you able to control the feelings, thoughts and emotions of that being that talks with the voice identical to yours? Should you die numerous times and be re-

stored to life, your character becomes more and more detached from his ego, and suffers from lack of precision and determination.

The dying throes of mankind create a number of wacky and unpredictable circumstances in which the game is set in. Things like truly unique experimental music, alike cacophony; extraordinary apparel; raving lunacy; semi-religious doomsday cults; secret societies; perhaps even *basilisk*-pictures and such oddities should be implemented to truly instill the feeling of utter alienation, since this is future after all, where the unthinkable has become commonplace (Wikipedia 2012a).

At first suggestion, the etymology of the title seemed fitting. The name is in fact quite symbolic in its own right. Europe is, of course, the old world, riddled by plague, economic crisis and other such unpleasanties, a place from where people seek to leave to a new world where everything is better, in this case the artificial world of the *Convocation*. As befits the milieu, such a world is made up of illusions. As the theme was cyberpunk, we decided it needed a cyberspace of some sort. I set forth to design such a feature as well, though I wished it to be something unique, and fitting to the theme of medieval dark ages otherwise foisted into the setting. The classical cyberspace archetype with its dreaded cubicles, pixelation, digitalization and that certain blue and green tint would not do, so I figured I would attempt to bring some originality into this aspect as well, and the *Convocation* is what I came up with. It is the cyberspace of the city, a representation of everything mankind is in the present day of Europa. It is conveyed as an engulfing blackness, centering on a flood of images and revelations that stem from the collective unity of each person present inside the cyber world. To enter such a place, you would connect your nervous system to a set of machines and let the stimulus pour into you. While inside the *Convocation*, data and information should be represented visually in intrinsic, archaic symbolism, as to hint to the sempiternal subconscious which constitutes the convocative cyber world. This is because the *Convocation* does not only exist inside metal and silicon machinery, but is also distorted by each living person inside of it. I wished it to appear as a mythical world, very much unlike our own, even a bit scary place, but intriguing nevertheless. There is the *immortality aspect* as well -

or *ghost aspect*, whichever is favored, where I suggest that the consciousness of each person who dies is subsumed into the Convocation where it would live forever. Inside, one can assume the role of anything imaginable, and engage in almost any kind of activity, as to ensure mirth and addiction. The inbuilt system of the Convocation uses your brain's capacity available to sustain the harmony of dreamer deployment and the math needed to hold such a digital fantasy world together. Visions inside this cyber world would range from mythical revelations of chromatic angelic creatures (Picture 8), to disapproving father figures (Picture 9), to anything feasible. Only imagination is the limit here, though everything seems to have this religious, old-fashioned overtone of style, for reasons of artistic continuity. To enter such a world is an experience of almost religious intensity, typically instilling immense pleasure and a sense of unity with the dreaming world, as well as the waking reality. The feeling after a recreational session inside the Convocation is one of serenity and peace of mind, which many other substances or methods have no way of providing to the ill-accustomed citizens of Europa.



Picture 8. The Convocation draft A

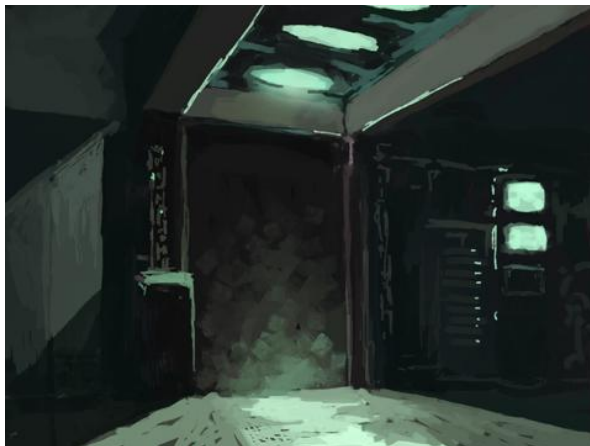


Picture 9. The Convocation draft B

5.2. The factions

When starting to work on the factions, the most prestigious and apparent figures in the cityscape, Memnosyne was the first to be given its shape. Its apparent familiarity helped us create form for all the rest of the societies as well. Ultimately, the companies differ very little in function. All are artificial machines of similar goals, only the flavor which surrounds them varies.

I wanted Memnosyne to be somewhat bleak and lifeless (Picture 10). It is a rigid paramilitary society, with numerous regulations on the general conduct its members should conform to. As the most contemporary of the companies, its members dress in functional ashen suits and their manner is often cool and sedated (although bravado and camaraderie is encouraged). With the undying loyalty the members are nurtured with, they stand as the most reliable of the five societies. Espionage among Memnosyne is difficult, since there exists a pattern where one person is responsible for the next, and in turn another person is responsible for you, alike among the soldiers of ancient Greece. The wiles and machinations of the other societies are sometimes hard to understand for an honest, working memnosyite, and thus this company, in its entire military prowess is one of the weakest. Open warfare being shunned upon, they resort to tactical calculations of success when dealing with the other companies. Angels belonging to Memnosyne generally display the usual traits: good handling of weaponry and excelling in open confrontations, but a certain lack of cunning and versatility.



Picture 10. Memnosyne architectural sketch.

The colors I affiliate with Memnosyne are those of bleak variety (Picture 11). Glistening black, grey, turquoise, teal and a hint of neon colors to brighten the details a bit constitute the color palette for this society. The outfits are modest and functional, the haircuts of similar styles, with little variation. Weapons are heavily present, and headpieces sometimes cover the entirety of the visage, so as to ensure functional-seeming design.

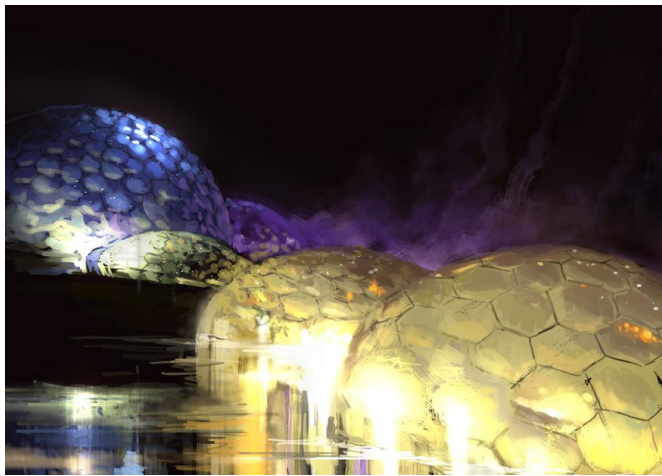


Picture 11. Memnosyne-styled angels.

The second society I started working on was Mai, which was in design documents described as the most peaceful of the companies. Its chief concern was the maintenance of automated recycling facilities and utilities in the city, and growing crops in vast domes of plastic and glass (Picture 12). These were also its assets, since Mai holds monopoly over the knowledge of food-production and agricultural advances. The technology dominant in this society is that of biology, bio-engineering and molecular chemistry. Mostly, Mai wish to be left

alone in their paradise gardens, where they teach their young the knowledge of the old.

I wanted the Mai-folk to appear careless and functional at the same time, yet wary of the threats the other societies pose (Picture 13). The weapons Mai use are ruthless, though rarely seen: needle pistols, poisons, radiation traps and such that take advantage of the biological weakness of human beings. Regarding combat, Mai prefer not to engage in open fights, but instead attempt diplomacy, or failing that, lures and snares in which to trap the opponent.



Picture 12. Mai spine – a superstructure of countless food-domes.



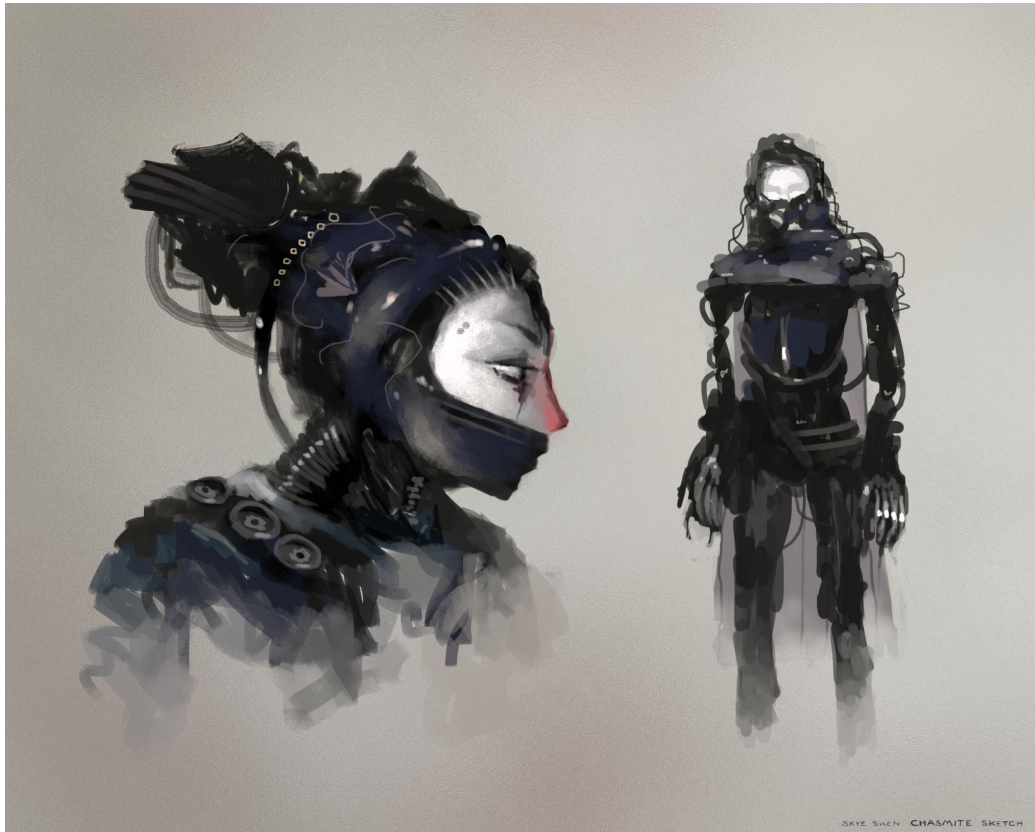
Picture 13. Mai angel.

The third company, Chasm, is the beating heart of Europa, that keeps the lifeblood of the city, electricity, flowing. Literally making their home in a great chasm of immeasurable depth deep under the city, they are conveniently sheltered from harm (Picture 14). The Chasm manufactures electrical assets of all kinds in great numbers, and sells these in return for sustenance, weaponry and information. They have little dealings with the Sivishe, who promote the joys of existence. In fact, they are cold and calculative creatures, though they have their vices and styles. The electricity and power that Chasm, among other things, provides is created in immense geothermal power plants, located at the bottom of the deep rift. The chasmites themselves take shelter in the countless dungeons in the walls of the great chasm.



Picture 14. The Chasm, as seen from above.

I wanted the chasmites to resemble gremlins or goblins of old tales, toiling in underground mines, but also to have an exotic aura about them. Being half-machines, they obviously needed some tubes, wires and gadgets embedded into their suits, which I wanted to convey the feeling that these beings are almost unable to exist without the assistance of artificial components. The result was something fairly odd: middle-eastern flavors mixed with a certain skeletal look (Picture 15).



Picture 15. Chasmite draft.



Picture 16. Chasm-dweller entering the Convocation.

The chasmites essentially represent transhumanism taken too far. They have replaced many parts of their biological body with invasive implants of their own design, and frequently dress in protective exoskeletal suits of hard plastic fibers.

They are pale, pallid creatures that rarely see sunlight in their long lives, and as they must consume food, so too they have to consume pure energy to thrive. In battle, the true chasmites prefer to let their robotic servants, defense mechanisms and turrets handle their opponents. Chasmite angels are a different matter though. The augmentations and implants they have installed in their tortured bodies might grant them superhuman strength, endurance and agility, or they might have concealed weapons of any manner inside their bionic bodies. With angels belonging to the Chasm, it is always hard to tell what manner of deception they secrete.

Chasm's society is based on extortion and greed, where only the strongest and most potent survive in the hierarchy. Inside the metallic walls of its native abyss, countless chasmites attempt to escape their realities by entering the Convocation whenever possible, to the point of being sickly addict to the sensation (Picture 16).

Sivishe, the commerce and mercantile society, reminds me of classical 80's cyberpunk visions. Imagine a contemporary clothing enterprise that started to expand without sensible limits to its hunger. Taking over all of the fashion, entertainment and recreational amenities, it could soon establish subtle control over the populous, and this is how you have Sivishe. The culture of this society is dominated by extreme vanity and a never ending competition of styles and artful display, and as such expresses the lengths of desperation some people will go to impress their peers. Wild celebrations are commonplace, where the public in masses attempts to elevate themselves with posh costumes, coiffures and designs. Sivishites are generally condescending of others who do not belong in their clique, and in turn they themselves are considered strange, even freakish. In contrast to the other societies, Sivishe is a special case in regard to its governance and workers, for there really aren't any. Its people are sensates, and they enjoy the Convocation as much as any other, but also strive to make their real lives as sensuous as possible. They surround themselves with amusements and pleasures, viewing this as the only purpose of existence worth the effort (Picture 17).



Picture 17. Sivishe plaza draft.

Since the nature of Sivishe is such an indifferent and carefree one, anarchistic governance is the most plausible option. While the luxury towers and domes are maintained by debonair entrepreneurs and noble-folk who do as they like, gangs and mobs have assumed control of the streets and passages, though kept in line by a mysterious, artificial entity, from which the whole society has derived its name. Sivishe has no manner of police force or military might, save one: enigmatic statues litter the bazaars, malls and mercantile centers. They survey the situation at all times, looking for signs of aggression and moving in to seize such operations at once. Steel and plastic of fabric, with advanced machinery inside, these Sivishe statues successfully prevent most of the crime in the whole area, but also efficiently repel attacks from other societies (Picture 18).

It is thought that the jovial nature of the sivishites is only a natural effect of the statues they venerate. Even a petty crime is punished with swift death from the ruthless machine-statues, so the inhabitants attempt to live in harmony with each other and visitors from the other societies. The origin of the statues is unknown, and any attempt to uncover this mystery as well result in severe reper-

cussions, which indicates that a complex cognition must be behind the lawmaker machines.



Picture 18. Promotional poster attempt depicting a Sivilite statue.

An Angel of the Sivilite can be almost of any profession. Although the countless enterprises that make up Sivilite do not constitute a standard uniform corporation, they do offer employment for Sivilite's Angels. Lacking a coherent goal, unlike the Angels of the other societies, sivilite Angels are thought of as unreliable, mercenary-like and are regarded as soldiers of fortune in employment for the highest bidder.

The fifth corporation is a commune of manipulators, spies, negotiators and other such covert personnel. The Pastiche handles information, secrets, scientific knowledge and history as its commodities. In their hierarchy, intelligence, memory and wisdom are the key virtues for elevation of status. With the help of implanted neurological chips and cognition enhancers, they have become biological computers, capable of rapid calculations and precise logic.



Picture 19. Pastichean high derogator signaling for a remote spying post.

The location of their area of influence varies from whom you ask it. In truth, they operate almost anywhere, selling bits and pieces of data and obtaining even more with subterfuge and espionage (Picture 19). The secret bases, hideouts and shelters of the Pastiche are cradles in which these stealthy creatures plan something sinister with all the combined data they have acquired. Nothing certain is known to the general public, but the Pastiche must be up to something. The shadow-government of this society has a hierarchy of utmost rigor, where certain information is only available if you are of explicit security coding. Pasticheans wear heavy robes when they do not mind exposition, but don any outfit for a spying task (Picture 20).



Picture 20. Pastiche spy draft.

In my depictions of the inhabitants of the city, I attempted to illustrate the awe and mystery of the aliens humanity have in the time of Europa become. Groups of people are gradually specializing in some manner of expertise, like warfare for example (Picture 21 and 22). Odd phenomena and curious creatures can be encountered in the dark passages and gangways of the city. Each one seems to be working towards some indeterminate goal, but the insinuated futility of such endeavors is also present. The enhancement of man via artificial alterations is commonplace, though the destructive urge that has always plagued humanity is as well - such tendencies the people of Europa have not been able to overcome.



Picture 21. Memnosyne grunt sketch.

The situation in the city is as follows: Memnosyne embraces the conflict of men, even lives from it, while its antithesis, Mai struggles to keep its members out of harm's way and in an altruistic gesture keeps the city fed and relatively clean of waste. Chasm broods deep underground, planning for every contingency and



Picture 22. Sivishe Angel sketch.

exploiting its own assets to the limit. Pastiche oversees the people in the city and exploits the weaknesses to insert loyal members to the ranks of other societies, and all the while Sivishe just engages in hedonistic bacchanals, indifferent to the ploys of others, protected by their insurmountable gynoid deities.

In these circumstances many kinds of plots may be composed, and should be too, since one society's path to triumph is undoubtedly different from the others'.

5.3. Creating a demo

The software used to create Europa will undoubtedly be Unity, since this is the program with which majority of the team is familiar with. It is a sort of authoring tool, capable of producing quality games and other interactive programs for various platforms, like the PC and many consoles and mobile devices. I must confess that my knowledge of this utility is almost nonexistent, so I better not dwell on it.

As I understand it, the importance of creating a demo-version of Europa is paramount, as it is the medium which lures investors to put their money on the project. A demo is an unfinished piece of Europa, intended to showcase the possibilities the final version might open, similar to pilot episodes of TV-shows.

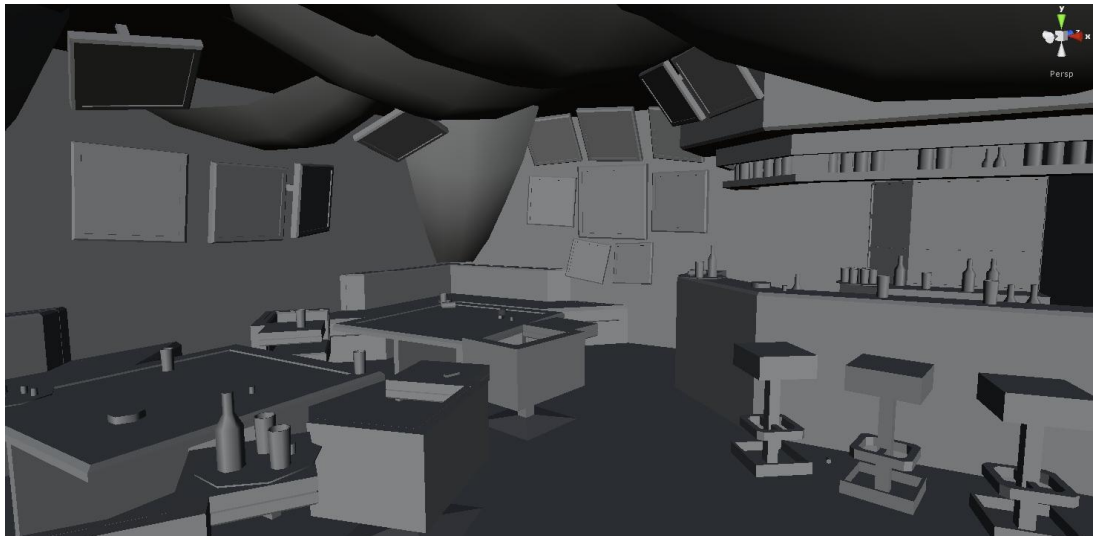
We pondered what might be a location that best illustrates the nature of the whole city, and we figured a common nightclub, or a bar might suit. It would be situated inside the Sivilishe-region of Europa, but be Memnosyne in design, so as to hint to the dualistic nature of the societies, with their secret pacts and mutual agreements behind the covert warfare. In addition, as a bar is commonly understood as a place of relaxation and pure leisure, it serves as the perfect place for the toils of the player of the demo, as Europa is essentially a city that has turned backwards on many things. A bar in this case would be a place to gather information and where to safely approach your enemies face to face. As my time began to near its end on my two month expedition to the world of game design, we managed to contrive a couple of minor quests whose purpose is to display the social aspect of the game.

To aid the 3D-modeling of the interior of the bar, I drew a quick atmospheric rendition of the bar we contrived (Picture 23). It should appear as a warm-colored, though somewhat blocky and Spartan in decorative design, as it is Memnosyne-owned, but there should be soft linens and some neon lights, both to convey mystery and privacy for a place such as this. The drawing is somewhat unfinished, but as a draft it will illustrate the bar well enough. The latter picture is Ojennus' 3D-rendition of the place, with added technological gadgets

and VDUs for a more cyberpunkish feeling, since as I understand this is the only area available in the demo, and should therefore represent the entire milieu (Picture 24).



Picture 23. Fast concept draft of the bar's interior.



Picture 24. 3D rendition without textures.

Once the map had taken form, the characters are modeled with 3D-sculpting software and implanted into the scenery as interactive objects, then the code is written which makes it all work. You may walk inside the bar and talk to the people inside, and engage yourself fully inside the digital world of Europa. The purpose of the demo is ultimately to demonstrate the gameplay and possibilities a full game might offer, so as many aspects as possible should be included.

Once again, as an artist, I have no clear vision on how the industry works in regard to the presenting of the demo and finding funding through favorable presentation of your project. However, I can safely assume that 2D illustration plays a major part in displaying the milieu properly. They are crucial at least as examples for 3D-designers to work on (Wikipedia 2012b). Who can say what inspires potential financiers? Unfortunately, such matters of chance cannot be foretold with precision.

6 CONCLUSION

For a layman, my enthusiasm and the amount of cognition invested in what is known as cyberpunk might seem over exaggerated, but personally I think we all have our passions in one field or another. The future is imminent, but what face it will bear remains to be seen. Though it may seem like the opposite, I am not a pessimistic person. I would enjoy a utopia as much as the next guy, especially if I could immerse myself in dystopian worlds through literature, video games and cinema in these utopias whenever I felt like it. Perhaps it is the thrill of excitement that beckons one to explore such sinister depths of the human imagination. This world of Europa is certainly not meant to be a lecture on anything, but instead a mere surrounding to tell an entertaining story.

Even though this project is still under construction, I feel it has in a way assumed a satisfactory form for now. To create a world from scratch, with only a few minor ideas to point the way is no easy feat, as I have come to know. In my own opinion, my most consequential contribution to Europa was more theoretical and abstract than functional, even though I did both in equal measures if the amount of time used is concerned. The demand to create fast and to simultaneously come up with sound ideas and drafts was challenging, since as I previously mentioned, I am used to a slower pace, and thus I am not completely satisfied with the quality of my renditions. On the other hand, the imagining of a world unlike ours seems to come naturally to me.

What I learned during this time in Grit Studio was that concept design revolves very heavily around the numbers in which the object, scenery or character is presented. Obviously, the more you illustrate something, the more clear it gets, while constantly keeping in mind the regulations, precepts and the general outlook which one form has to adhere to. The illustration, of course, plays a significant role, but first you need to come up with the right thing to draw, and that is not as simple as it may sound like. To probe the exact form someone else might have in mind and attempt to replicate it with satisfying outcome proved quite challenging. Another important case to be presented is that you must inspire

yourself to get excited of the project at hand, or you will never come to invest the full manifold of your abilities and imagination.

On another matter, I understand the heavy financial and creative burdens a young company suffers from, but I would have wished more enthusiasm regarding this project on behalf of the rest of the team. There seemed to be a curious inactivity among some of my co-workers, though it is possible they were engaged in some other project that was more financially viable. Therein exists a certain dilemma, however, that when only a token attempt is made towards a certain goal, and without the full support of the team that is unable to voice their doubts regarding the project for some reason or the other, the advancements made are ultimately in vain. I wish the team all the best and I sincerely hope my attempts to create Europa were not inconsequential.

As for my role in the creation of Europa, I found the amount of trust placed on me refreshing. The general feeling while we were brainstorming was that all good ideas were thoroughly welcome, though due to a lack of enthusiasm on the part of most of the team members, we resorted mostly to merely designing Europa between the two of us with Ojennus, him being a game-designer and I assuming the position of world- and concept designer. This surprising surge of artistic freedom in a commercial project was delightful, though the pedagogic value of such conduct could be argued, since I prefer teamwork over simply contemplating on your own.

Stepping blindly into the challenge made me realize, among other important things, the true effect of motivation on innovation. Without my personal interest in the subject, I would have likely considered this project a nuisance, a mere burden I have yet to overcome. To find one's trade is a relief after years of contemplating this and that, and trying various things. This project has greatly helped me take the decisive step into the world of game design, what I intend to pursue as my career. All things considered, I feel as though I have found my craft at long last and regret nothing.

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The author would like to give credit to writer Jack Vance, for his imagination-inspiring literature works that influenced the development of this project.

GLOSSARY

Basilisk: A theoretical image that upon viewing will instantly cause the spectator to perish or come to some manner of harm.

Concept designer: Creates a visual representation of an idea before it is placed into production, e.g. for films, video games, animation and comic books.

Cyberpunk: Often this sort of fiction presents a dystopia where alteration of the human body is possible, frequent, and even encouraged; enormous companies dictate the laws of the state; and where advanced technologies have made possible many things unthinkable, e.g. virtual realities and the hacking of the human brain.

Cyborg: A human that is fitted with integrated machinery, such as implants and mechanical limbs.

Dystopia: As opposed to utopia, a dystopia is a state of society where most things have gone wrong, where oppression and exploitation are common, though often cloaked in good intentions or blatant lies.

RPG or Role-playing game: Typically understood as a type of game where the player is allowed interactivity with the development of the plot and/or his character.

Shooter: A type of game where the emphasis is on aiming, precision and agility, usually portrayed from the third or the first perspective. An RPG and a shooter are not mutually exclusive.

AGREEMENT FOR A THESIS

LIITE 2

NORTH KARELIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
AGREEMENT FOR A THESIS

CONTRACTING PARTIES:

ORDERING PARTY GRIT STUDIO OYContact information: Kummunkatu 13 83500 Outokumpu Finland GSM: 040-482 7977STUDENT Heikki KuusipaloContact information: Sairaalakatu 8 as 21 80100 Joensuu Finland GSM: 044-547 6549

COMMISSION AGREEMENT:

<p>Concept art, design, illustration</p>
--

Concerning the agreement, the parties have today agreed about the following (e.g. financing, deadlines)

<p>Ordering party</p>

The student retains rights to showcase his works publicly in portfolios, galleries and other such medias.

The ordering party holds all rights to use the arts and ideas in any project, as long as the proper artist is credited.

<p>Student(s)</p>

The advisor for the thesis at North Karelia University of Applied Sciences:

Samu Aarnio Samu Aarnio

The commission and its results are confidential until ___/___/___ at the following terms:

Date and signatures

1.9.2011

Samu Aarnio
 Client

Jonne Ojanen
 Grit Studio CEO

Heikki Kuusipalo
 Student

Heikki Kuusipalo