Game Design Document

Gather your explorers and descend into the depths of the Bathyal, a place filled with wonders and nightmares.

Discover relics and hidden places in the world below. Can your adventurers reach the bottom?

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TEAM

The content of this macro can only be viewed by users who have logged in.	
Matr. Nr.	2192466
Role	2D Artist

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Matr. Nr.	2548180
Role	Programmer

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Role	Programmer

SPECIFICATIONS

Working Title

Genre

Concept

Target age classification

Platform

Engine

Bathyal

Tactical Exploration, Roguelite

Lead a group of characters down through the alien layers of a chasm. Make tactical decisions t
alive and unlock new paths, to finally uncover the secrets of the abyss.

Players age 12 and older.

PC

Unreal Engine 4 (3D)

INTRODUCTION

PILLARS

1. **Exploration:** Landscape, Creatures, Mechanics & Lore
2. **Horror/Dread:** A gloomy & dark atmosphere

UNIQUE SELLING POINTS

- Selling the fantasy to explore the *Unknown*
- Unique visuals conveying excitement & horror
- Recognizable art style and design
- Gameplay mechanics found in board games
- *Dark, Grim & Gritty*

TARGET AUDIENCE

Our Audience enjoys:

- Turn-based tactics & board games
- Resource allocation & short-term planning
- Meaningful decisions
- Customizing characters & builds

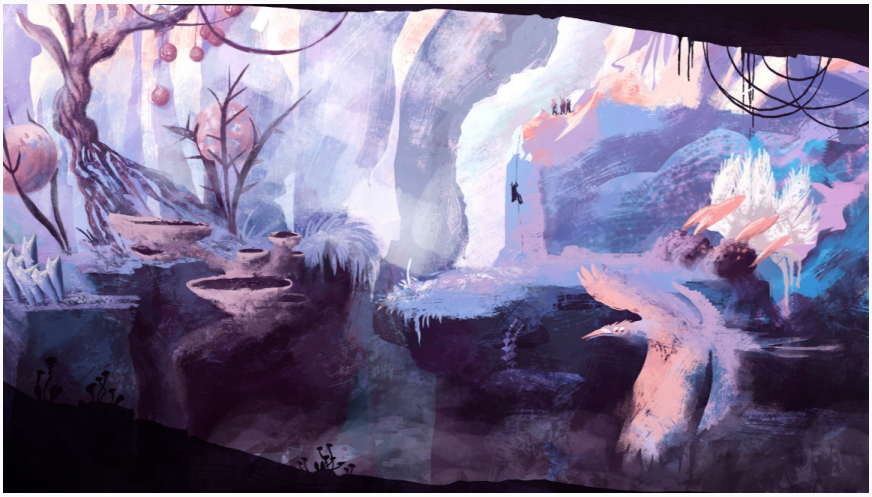
IDEAL PLAY SESSION

Sam buys a game he heard his favourite Twitch-streamer talk about. Sam loves games about strange and unknown worlds and tactical challenges. Upon starting it, he sees the silhouettes of three people looking down into the darkness of an abyss. The music starts: a haunting, dark melody. He is intrigued and already feels the atmosphere of the game: gloomy and mysterious.

He sees a short cutscene explaining the background story: When did the chasms open? Why are people going down there? He starts to feel excited about exploring the chasm and uncovering its secrets himself.

The cutscene transitions into the game. There, Sam sees the characters who are waiting to start their journey into the depths. There is not much he can tweak in their equipment at this point so he decides to just go with the defaults and starts his adventure.

What he sees now is a large ledge on the side of the steep cliff walls. On there he finds his party. He notices that the background music is now slightly more unsettling: the real game begins. Sam notices alien-looking plants and ruins spread across the plateau. Some places catch his attention, among them a spherical, papery structure that is held by



thorny branches. When hovering the cursor over it, it starts glowing. He realizes there is some kind of game-event waiting for him and decides this will be the first thing to explore.

Sam now tries to see what else he can do. When holding the left mouse button he can turn the camera around the small plateau. He notices a sanity bar on the bottom of the screen. Realizing that his characters can apparently go mad, he becomes more careful before clicking away. He clicks on the sphere and Sam reads a description, telling him that it has a hole large enough for a human to enter and that it smells like cinnamon. Sam chooses the scientist and the adventurer to investigate the structure and he pays some sanity for them to climb in.

One side of the sphere disappears and its insides become visible. A few words describe where the strong cinnamon scent is coming from: Hundreds of semi-translucent strings are dangling from the top. They are thick like fingers and the smell is so strong it's sickening. There is something shiny further back. Now Sam can choose between three actions using different abilities: Wind through the strings quickly (acrobatics), cut a way through the strings (fighting), or carefully cut one of them for research and leave (no ability check).

He also notices that his scientist passed a plant life check upon entering, and he sees the bonus info that this is a carnivorous life form, which means that the strings are dangerous to the touch. Knowing that, he thinks that cutting down the strings is the safer option. The UI shows him that each decision requires him to roll some dice by spending sanity and that the more he spends, the more likely he is to succeed. He also sees that he can use items to help. Not having any of those, Sam thinks he could spend more sanity to be safe but decides against it, to not run out of sanity too fast. Unfortunately, both characters get entangled in the strings. They feel searing pain where the strings touch their skin and barely manage to struggle free, both suffering a wound. The spheres side reappears and he sees a speech bubble over the scientist's head: "Never again!". He is unable to enter the sphere for the rest of this run.

Learning that every action he takes could have severe consequences, Sam is determined to beat the hostile Bathyal by playing his cards right from now on. He can't wait to see what lurks behind the next corner of this strange place.

NARRATIVE

Shadows move in the depths, hungry eyes and restless limbs. A sinister world of beauty and terror which swallows those foolish enough to approach it. Oh, the chasm is deep, filled with darkness and nightmares. Go there, if you must – but know that you might never return, my friend.

The game takes place inside a giant, multi-layered chasm. The chasm has swallowed the big cities of the world. Most people don't know why this has hap pened, but afterwards, the world started to change: Toxic fumes leaked from the depths and changed the weather for worse. Swarms of strange insects crawled from the murkiness and infested the fields, the orchards and the animals of the people who lived away from the big cities, in villages or as nomads. Nowadays, many have become sick and barely have enough to eat.

Some people have climbed into the chasm in search for answers. They have brought unfamiliar relics from below, some in the language of the city dwellers, some alien and outlandish. They are scientists, treasure hunters, soldiers of fortune. Some want to gain knowledge about this world below, some want the gold they seem certain to find. Some come for the thrill, and some are desperate to end the curse the chasm has cast upon the land.

In time, they (and the player) will learn that the cities were not innocent as to their downfall. Warnings have been ignored, and the underworld has been exploited, thus causing a delicate balance to collapse. The player will gradually find out more about the exact events that led to the world as it is now. The chasm itself is filled with toxic air, which is why adventurers need to plan their trip thoroughly, as no-one can withstand the fumes forever if they want to stay sane and healthy.

The chasm has many layers, and going down feels like entering the maw of the world. There is a bottom, but few have seen it and rumor has it that this place is full of structures that resemble houses, though uncanny and not much like human dwellings. On their way down, the adventurers will see many ruins of the fallen cities, among the multifarious fauna and flora of the chasm. Most creatures here are dangerous, as are the plants, but with enough persistence and curiosity it's possible to find a way down.

The layers of the chasm each have their distinct personality and style, because they symbolize different ecological biomes. The chasm's ecosystem strives to be believable, yet alien. All creatures encountered and studied will be added to a bestiary that will prove helpful on future runs.

CAST

CHARACTERS

The player will have several different characters to lead on their journey. They come from different backgrounds and have different reasons to explore the depths, but ultimately, they all know that teaming up will improve their chances of coming back alive. There is Nazyr, an ageing professor of zoology from the Purple Sea, or Yama, a young tinkerer from the mountains. There is Zara, aristocrat from a fallen dynasty, or Kesirat who doesn't talk much but knows how to wield a sabre. More will come and go, many will lose their life in the chasm. Who and why will always be different. The characters will wear masks as they descend, to avoid some of the toxic fumes.

NPCs

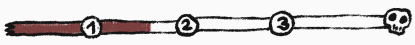
The world inside the chasm is pretty much devoid of human life. Apart from the odd adventurer here and there, the only other humans the player can encounter are very strange people, who have grown accustomed to the poisonous air. They aren't exactly human anymore, but have been twisted and consumed by the chasm. Many have forgotten how to speak or have fungi growing from their bodies. Their skin may be green, and their eyes may see like cats' in the darkness. The player is better off avoiding them, but the occasional encounter will occur.

MECHANICS

RESOURCES

Sanity & Time

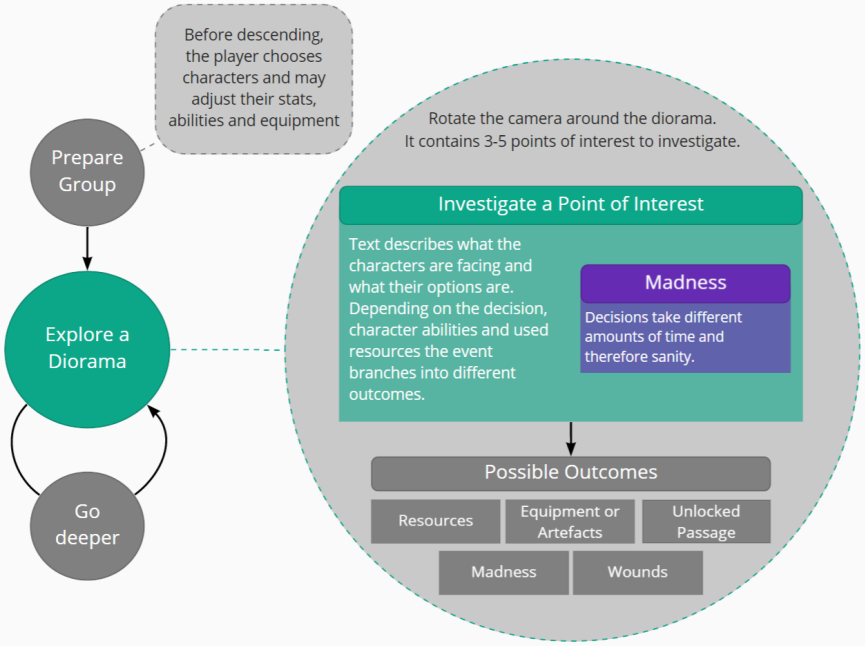
The toxic atmosphere of each biome causes the characters to go mad. The longer they stay there the worse it gets and the more hostile the biome becomes. Since Bathyal is turn-based, different actions take different amounts of time and sanity units. The characters' sanity is the most important resource in our game.



Items & Knowledge

To better overcome challenges, characters can use item and knowledge resources. They are acquired through exploration and consumed on usage.

GAME LOOP

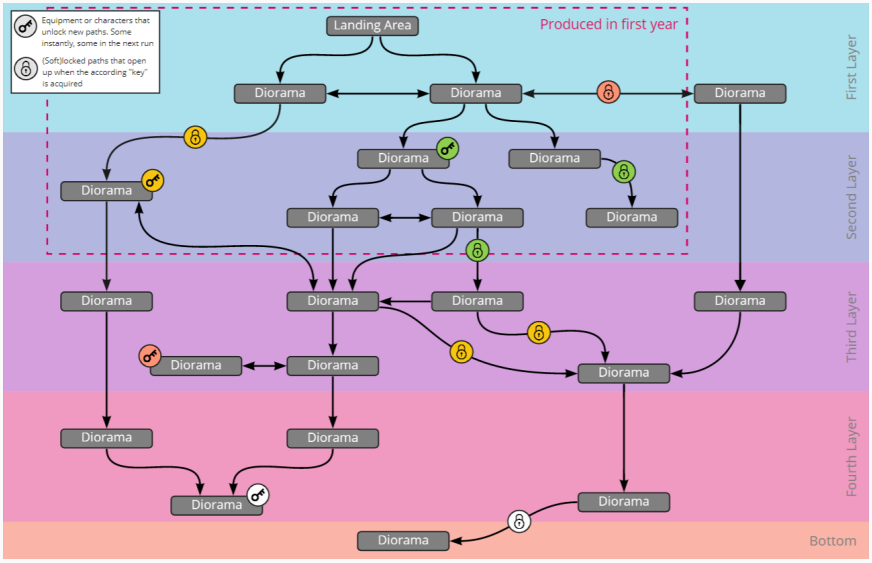


GATHERING A PARTY

When our game starts, the player is given a team of three characters: an adventurer, a scientist and a treasure hunter. While traveling they will find other characters that are trapped in the chasm. If they free them and the run eventually ends, those new characters will be recruitable in the next runs. The player can now build their own team from the

default characters and those they saved. Each character has their own attributes, abilities and Items but can be customized as well in order to optimise the team and reach deeper levels. Some characters and abilities open up alternative paths, previously hardly traversable.

DIORAMA / LEVEL MAP



TRAVERSING THE CHASM

The chasm consists of many layers. Each layer contains multiple dioramas which are connected via passages. However, certain passages are blocked or hidden and require special key-characters or key-items, which the player has to find and unlock first. Unlocked paths can open up shortcuts between the layers for future runs or reward players with rare items. Every layer will have its own theme, colour palette, and

(maybe) its own sound. This helps keep the player engaged throughout the game. There are multiple branching ways down that lead through different biomes and dioramas. To reach the bottom of the chasm and to finish the game, the player needs to find the last key-character hidden in the fourth and most dangerous layer.

DIORAMA

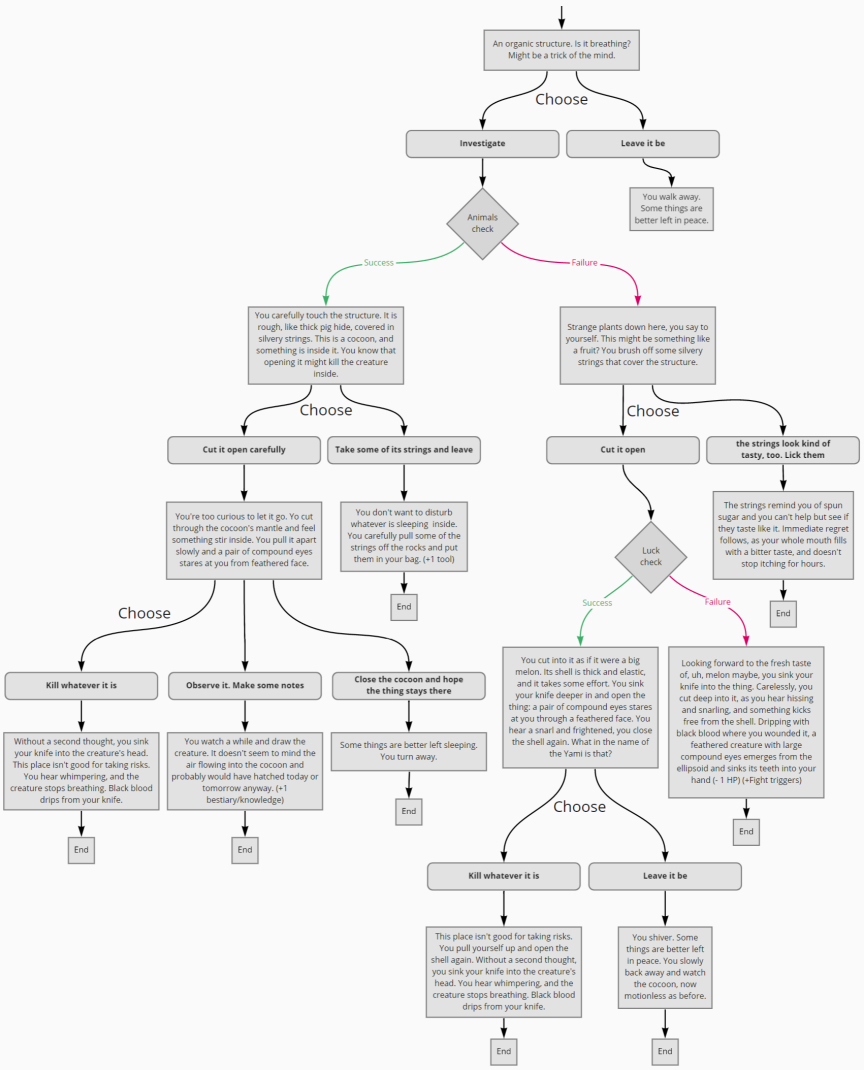
When entering a diorama players are greeted by a short introduction text. Afterwards they can interact with the diorama by turning the camera around and selecting places

they want to investigate. Sometimes these places are not immediately visible and players have to look around a little.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Before committing to the investigation of a point of interest, players get a short description of what they are facing and can decide to leave it be. If they still wanna investigate, they have to pay time and sanity for every following decision.

Most decisions require the players character to pass a check on one of their abilities. They may use their resources to increase their chance of success or even compensate for bad luck. This would be the event-structure of the diorama on the gif above:



PASSAGE EVENTS

When moving from one diorama to the next, players are confronted by a random event. It will occur occasionally and doesn't have deep structures of decisions, like in a normal

diorama. the player still has to make short decision that will reward or punish their party.

PROGRESSION

During a Run

- Characters can improve through loot and experience but also regress through wounds or insanity.
- The deeper the party descends, the fiercer the environment will become.

Across Runs

- New characters, abilities and items can be unlocked that enable new tactics and routes for future runs.
- Knowledge of the world makes future runs more likely to succeed.

ART STYLE

VISUALS

We try to create our own Style by mixing physical based rendering and visible brushstrokes. Our goal is to achieve a rough painterly look without using any post process effects. We want to maintain a realistic behaviour of light to simulate the increase of darkness as you move deeper into the chasm. We also want to have realistic light interaction with surfaces so that our assets fit perfectly into the given scenery, therefore we use a PBR rendering Pipeline. To avoid much effort by hand painting each Asset, we work on a procedural workflow to achieve the painterly look.

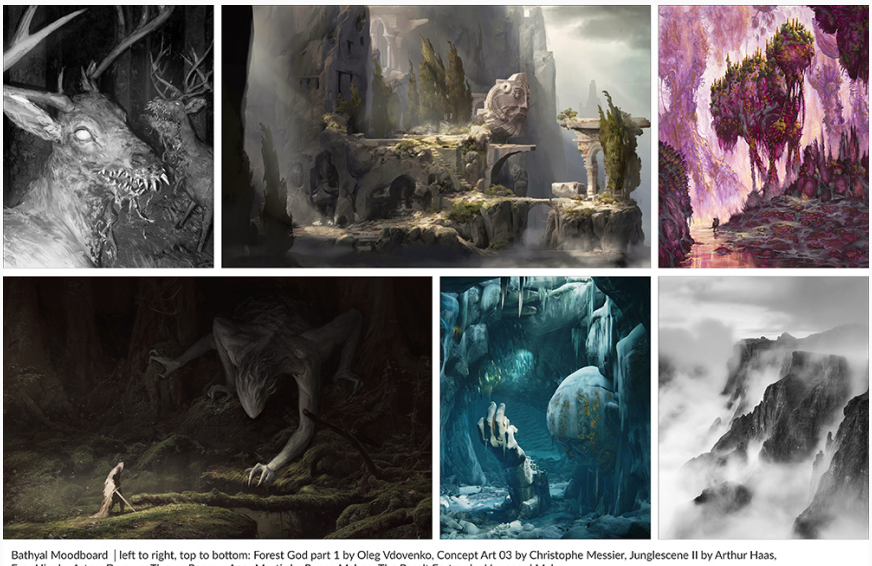
Every layer will have a distinct color palette. The lower the team descends, the more alien the environments will be.
At the top layer the environment shapes, foliage and living beings will have similarities with real life environment (e.g. commonly shaped rocks, monsters have similarities with animals, there will be some known plants).
At the bottom levels, there will be unnatural environment shapes, grotesque monsters, and strange looking plants.

SOUNDTRACK

Our game's soundtrack should support a feeling of mystery but also be a little unsettling at times. In layers deeper down the unsettling parts become more frequent and dominant.

Sound effects underline every player interaction, like button clicks or item selection as well as different consequences of player decisions.

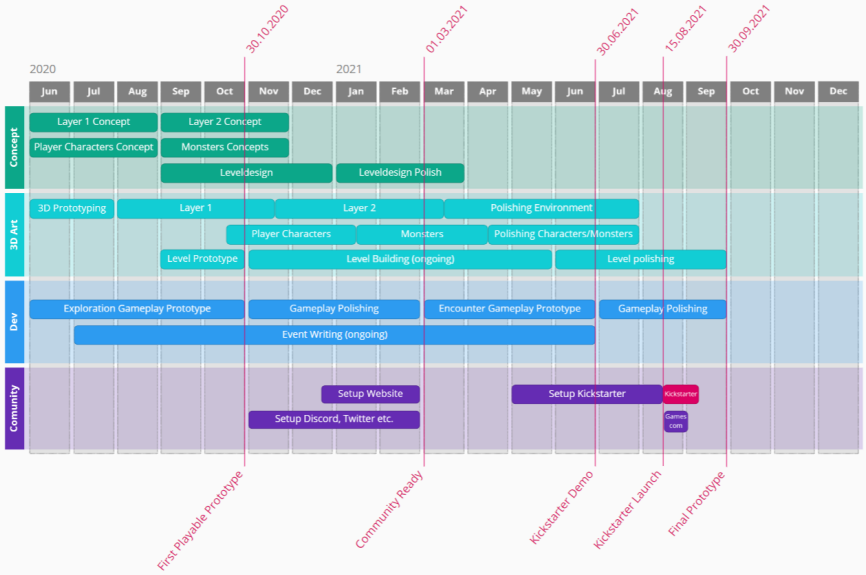
MOODBOARD



Bathyal Moodboard | left to right, top to bottom: Forest God part 1 by Oleg Vdovenko, Concept Art 03 by Christophe Messier, Junglescene II by Arthur Haas, Fear Him by Artem Demura, Throne Room – Agor Mortis by Ronan Mahon, The Basalt Fortres by Hougaard Malan

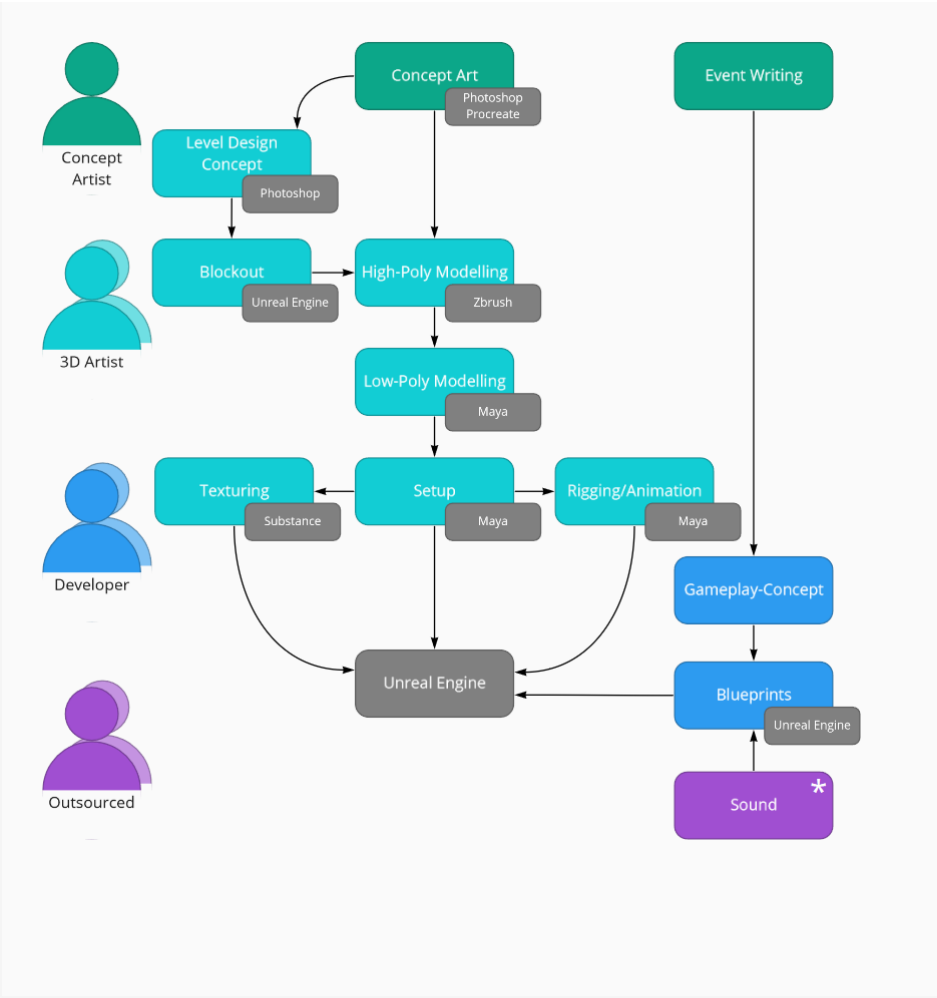
PROJECT PLAN

ROADMAP



First playable prototype	Playable blockout demo (2 explorable dioramas, 20 events, dummy
Community ready	Mostly game ready first layer (5 dioramas, 50 events, player charact and Twitter setup.
Kickstarter	Game ready assets on first layer and mostly game ready assets on s Presentable demo ready, showing the basic gameplay and polished
Final prototype	Game with polished first two layers that's presentable to publisher

PIPELINE



SCOPE

MOSCOW

Must Have

Gameplay

- Plateau navigation
- Exploration events with branching paths
- Character stats, abilities and items

Environment

- Modelled & animated characters
- High quality 3D assets (dioramas)

Audio

- Main game theme
- Basic sound effects

Roguelike Mechanics

- Quick play-rounds and thrilling game-flow
- Session can be interrupted and continued at any time

Should Have

Gameplay

- Turn-based creature encounters with individual behaviour
- Several play styles as result of chosen Characters and their abilities
- Insanity mechanic

Environment

- Unique look for plateaus of different layers
- A deep lore connected by events and locations to explore
- Special effects

Audio

- Theme for each layers
- Theme for creature encounters
- Combat sound effects

Could Have

Gameplay

- Usage of environmental hazards for own advantage
- Animations for every action in combat
- Special animations for characters (e.g. execution)
- Different resources and crafting system
- Each character has their own side-story (side-narratives)

Audio

- More variation of themes and sound effects

Won't Have

- Multiplayer
- Complex animations like facial animations

NEEDED GAME SYSTEMS

Character

Stat & Ability Systems
Ressource/Inventory System

Event

Decision Tree
Check System
Save System

SWOT

Strengths

- Experienced team members
- Cost-Efficient
- High 3D production quality

Opportunities

- Unique game concept
- Large audience for tactic genre
- Unsaturated niche in tactical exploration games
- Rogue-like with narrative
- Germany as a location for business

Weaknesses

- Outsourcing sound
- Limited budget
- Overcomplexity of game mechanics

Threats

- Drowning in the sea of new indie game releases
- Not being able to deliver the desired feeling & visions

INSPIRATIONS

DARKEST DUNGEON

Developed and published by Red Hook Studio, 2016

Link: https://www.darkestdungeon.com/

Genre: Indie, Roleplay, Roguelike, Turnbased

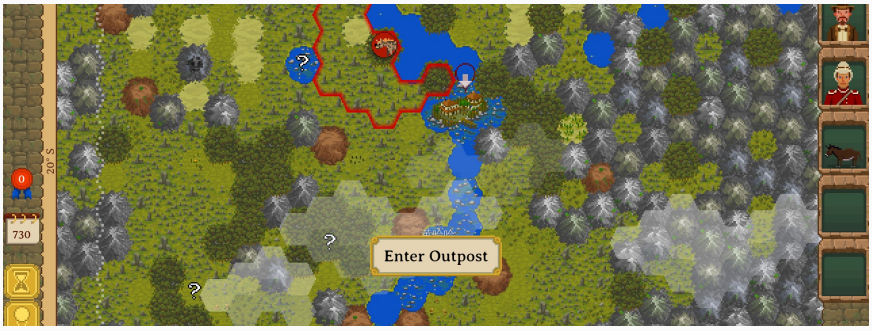
Gameplay: Darkest Dungeon is a role-playing game in which the player manages a roster of heroes and adventurers to explore these dungeons and fight the creatures within. The group of characters move side-view in formation, allowing for certain attacks, abilities, or defenses if they were in the right position. Characters in the front could have powerful melee attacks but take more damage, while characters in the back would be more protected but limited to weaker ranged attacks.

Further character classes have various strengths and weaknesses based on their rank positioning, creating more strategic elements for the player to explore. Impact of stress and afflictions is heavily emphasized in the game, using special graphics and sound cues to signal the onset of an affliction, preventing the player from having full control or potential of the affected character. Each round has the goal of collecting as much treasure, artefacts and plot points (required for upgrading buildings in the settlement), while preventing the death of any character, since death is permanent.

Darkest Dungeon Resources

Treasure	Treasure helps you buy new equipment, skills for characters or gear upgrades.
Artefacts	Items which can be equipped by characters to improve their values in combat.
Health	Once a character's health falls to zero, they die.
Horror	Representing the stress a character suffers, they might be affected by despair (Once horror hits the 200 mark, a character immediately dies from a heart attac

CURIOUS EXPEDITION



Developed and published by Maschinen-Mensch, 2016

Link: https://curious-expedition.com/index2.html

Genre: Indie, Roguelike, Turnbased

Gameplay: Curious Expedition casts players as late 19th century explorers, on a mission to chart the undiscovered corners of the world and pilfer as many priceless artefacts as possible, all in a grasp for fame and glory. Players safely guide their party across a new procedurally generated wilderness each round,

carefully managing limited food and resources to stave off hunger and madness, maintaining good relations with the increasingly unimpressed locals, and battling deadly fauna along the way. The ultimate goal each game is to be crowned the finest explorer of them all by scoring highest against AI opponents across a set number of rounds, with points being accrued for ransacking archaeological sites for ancient treasures.

THE 7TH CONTINENT

Developed and Published by Serious Poulp, 2017

Link: https://the7thcontinent.seriouspoulp.com/

Gameplay: In the exploration board game The 7th Continent players begin by choosing an explorer character and discover the extent of a wild new land through a variety

of terrain and event cards. Fraught with danger, players have to craft tools, weapons, and shelter to ensure survival. The final goal is to discover the means to remove the curse haunting the player or die trying.

MADE IN ABYSS

Created by Akihito Tsukushi and published by Takeshobo (Manga). Anime directed by Masajuki Kojima and produced by Kinema Citrus.

Link: http://miabyss.com/#1

Made In Abyss is a manga and anime series by Akihito Tsukushi, which follows the orphan girl Rico and her robot-friend Reg on their descent into The Abyss – a strange, giant hole in the earth, where they hope to find her mother.