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The Garden of Time
3/3/14

       Time is infinite. At least, that's the idea that sparked my imagination for this project. I had made a game for a creative project last semester, though I was overly ambitious in my design and I only managed to complete a fraction of what I was trying to say. Learning from my mistakes, I decided to forgo the idea of making a 'game' with real gameplay mechanics, and instead building something that more closely resembles an interactive sculpture garden (hence the title). With this approach, I managed to complete something that conformed much more closely to what I was actually trying to say, as well as having a very scalable development process. I was able to complete the bare minimum for the game (movement, underwater effects, and most prominent sculptures) in a little under 15 hours, which is less than half the time I spent on the last game. After this point, I could add as much to the game as the remaining time allowed, and could consider it finished at any point along the way. While many people have had trouble with the idea that there is no goal to the game other than to explore at your leisure, I'm still satisfied with the result. However, it is very unlike my original design for it(as most of my projects go).

       Originally, I had considered creating a much more interactive piece that was highly constrained on the idea of the aging statues. There were several problems with it, including music licensing issues, and dependance on completing very time consuming elements (without which it would feel incomplete). I eventually modified my idea to the one that you have just played (if you're reading this before playing it, please play it before continuing, you can find it at willcassella.net). One common misconception among the people who tested the game is that the more abstract elements were more or less designed at random, which is absolutely not true. Every model, texture, effect, and mechanic has a very specific meaning to me, not all of which is entirely definable. I'll try to describe the meaning as

best I can, in the form of a walk through.

When you first start the game, you find yourself underwater, looking at what appears to be a large sandy arch. This is actually a Möbius strip, a 3-dimensional object that has only one side, and one edge. If you look closely, you can see a set of footprints that traverse the infinte face of the strip. This is simply to introduce players to the concept of this world: Time *is* space, and since time is infinite, space is as well. If walk to the other side of the strip, you can see a set of footprints in the sand that extend far off in either direction. These footprints are identical to the ones on the Möbius strip, further implying that time here, is really space. This path can be thought of as a tour of the garden, though it does not cover everything.

Assuming you follow the footsteps in the direction they lead, the first object you will encounter is an array of overlapping piano keys. To me, this represents how the different lifetimes of different people occupy seperate (though frequently overlapping) slices of time. Some are shorter than others, some end before others start, and some encompass the entirety of others. The meaning behind this is that when, and how long we live is completely irrelivent; there will always be lifetimes before and after ours, what matters is what we do and make in the time we are given: hence the piano keys.

If you continue down the path, you will soon see the beginning (or end) of a series of statues. A child, an adult, an elderly person, and an elderly person holding a baby. I originally considered removing these, as they contrasted too strongly with the abstract nature of the rest of the garden. Time is not exclusive to the human race, and I felt that the meaning was too clearly spelled out. However, this is what I think of when I try to capture the idea that these statues represent, so I added them in despite their flaws. They represent how we as people, seem to traverse the many stages of life almost *simultaneously*. Today, I am young and have a long life ahead of me, but one day I will be old and only have vague recollections of events that feel like yesterday. They feel like yesterday, because they were. How long something will take to come is irrelivent, it will happen eventually. The future is as real and

present as *today.* The reverse is also true, if last week, month, or year was just as tangible as the moment you read these words, why should it not still exist somewhere beyond the tunnel vision of our mortality?

The final (or first) sculpture on the tour is that of a ghostly clock with a solid slice in it. The meaning behind this is simple: while we only witness a limited portion of the entirety of time, once we are gone time continues on without us, as well as those who will eventually see their slice end, and those who have yet to see their slice appear.

Continue on the path, and you will see the Möbius strip appear before you, just as you began. This hammers home the point the garden is making all along: Time is *infinite*. However, in this garden, time has been turned into *space*. Is time, in fact, the sole face of a Möbius strip? Have you been walking on the strip that appears before you, all a long? Have things here changed since you've been gone? Look around and see for yourself. Now that you have completed the tour, feel free to wander on or off the path. There are other sculptures in the garden, some of which are in plain sight, others of which are rather difficult to find. Some of them continue the metaphore that has been established, while other have very personal meenings to me. Don't worry about getting lost, time is infinite. At least, that's the idea that sparked my imagination for this project.