

Helpless Design Document

Olympus Interactive

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For the Pirate Software Game Jam (January 2024)

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Pitch:

You are a machine with a single purpose; to survive. **Helpless** is a single-player experimental simulation game designed to allow players to experience the existential dread of being a machine tasked to clean up its mess for an eternity.

Inspiration:

<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/34812>

Inspired heavily by the art piece “Can’t Help Myself” by Sun Yuan and Peng Yu. When thinking about “It’s Spreading” as a theme, we came across an idea that instead of expanding something, the player tries to keep things in. This is when we thought about this art piece and how we could gamify it for players to be the robot.



Controls:

We want to design this game around having a very simple control scheme, only needing the mouse to perform every action in the game, including navigating UI and interacting with the robot/oil.

Mouse: Left Click / Drag

Feature List:

Robot Arm:

- The end of the arm will follow the mouse.
- When the arm is extended fully, it will not reach the mouse if out of its range.

- Hold the left mouse button to lower the arm.
- The player is leaking oil that must be recollected.

Physics-based Oil Simulation:

- Flows out from all sides and must be brought back into the machine as a form of life/HP.
- If the player loses too much oil, the machine will break down.

Machine Breakdown:

- Losing too much life will cause permanent damage to the machine (loss of range and motion).

Litter:

- The player must push away litter that people throw into the exhibit.
- Litter will clog the machine if brought too close.
- The player can push away litter so it doesn't become a problem.

Museum Guests:

- Start with a lot of people and indistinguishable chatter.
- Towards the end of gameplay, the player is left alone, slow and broken down.
- People will look at the player, take pictures, be on their phone, and may throw litter inside the exhibit if not entertained.

Art Design:

The Player's Character:

The player will be an industrial-looking machine that has a giant arm, with the only purpose of scraping oil back inside of itself.

Environment:

The game will take place in a pristine, clean museum with expensive-looking paintings on the wall—a stark contrast to the deteriorating exhibit of the player.



Theme Implementation:

By the end of a playthrough, the oil in the player's container will spread enough that it will be impossible to contain, with blotches of oil in unreachable areas.

Audio Design:

Music:

We plan to have minimal to no music in the game, mostly because our game is going to be set in an art museum. We didn't think music would be appropriate for this setting.

Sound Effects:

We plan to have several sound effects to make up for the lack of music, including...

- Muttering from museum guests, both from crowds and individuals.
- Robot sound effects that get more distorted and broken as the game progresses.
- A camera flash sound effect.
- Seeping oil sound effects.
- Scraping sound effects for when the player tries to interact with the ground.

Minimum Viable Product (MVP):

#	Assignment	Type	Status	Finish By	Notes
1	Design Document	Other ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 26...	
2	Create Player Robot Asset	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 13...	
3	UI Mockups	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 13...	
4	Robot Animations and Interactions (IK)	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 19...	
5	Oil Physics	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 14...	
6	Create Oil Shaders	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 19...	
7	Track Health of the Robot	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 14...	
8	Create Exhibit Assets	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 19...	
9	Create AI for Museum Guests	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 19...	
10	Create VFX for Guest taking a Photo	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 15...	

#	Assignment	Type	Status	Finish By	Notes
11	Create Robot Ailments	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 21...	
12	Create Menus In-Engine	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 19...	
13	Polish Museum Assets/Robot Assets	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 22...	
14	Create Extra Posters/Museum Art	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 25...	
15	Implement SFX	Audio ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 25...	
16	Create Logic For Litter	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 24...	
17	Connect Scenes	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 24...	
18	Final Polish	Other ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 26...	
19	Create itch.io Page	Other ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 26...	
20	Submit	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jan 26...	

Formal Goals:

With the 2-week time limit (and the team returning to college in the middle of the jam), we won't be able to spend as much time on the game as we wanted to, but that is accounted for within our scope. We would like to get this game into a playable state and to a point where people enjoy the experience. To accomplish this, we would need all that is detailed above in the MVP.

Also, of course, we are all participating in hopes of learning something new. Even if the game doesn't succeed, we know of our successes if we come out of this experience with even one new skill.

Art Concepts:

