

Zachary's ePortfolio Reflection

A Look at My Career Path

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Abstract

This essay contains the process I went through with creating an ePortfolio and how I went about choosing the 3 artifacts that I wanted to highlight for this final project. I also want to highlight the reason why I went with Game Design and how I even came about being in that major in the first place. I also want to highlight some works that have to do with the Video Game Industry as a whole, and how I am going into a minefield with how high the climate is in the industry.

The ePortfolio Process

I have wanted to compile all the work that I had done throughout my college career into one big portfolio because we should all be proud of what we achieved and created while going through the education process, no matter how good or bad it may look. But I wanted to be sure to highlight everything because no matter the struggle, the result was always putting me one step ahead. Now it was a little hard to get some things on the ePortfolio, and I will have to apologize because I just couldn't get some files to work. But in my ePortfolio are three things that I highlighted because they were big for me. Those being the first game prototype I created, Emerald Cove, then the first ever game engine project I did to learn about how Unity worked. The final thing I added was a reflection on one of my favorite games, Alan Wake because I wanted to show that I could also go through the route of journalism if I chose to because that is a field that is also open to me. I wanted to implement some of the coding that I had worked on, but unfortunately, the files would not translate to WordPress, as I am still learning the ins and outs of WordPress and what you can do with it. I do want to keep adding to this though, as I feel it

would be beneficial to my career and would help me get my foot in the door with any studio that would take me. This leads me to my next point, why did I choose Game Design?

Why Game Design?

When I first came to Old Dominion University, I sought out a career in Cyber Crime. Still, I grew disinterested because I didn't want my college experience to be a slog with the possibility of not graduating on time. So, I sat down and thought about what I would want to do. I took an Intro to Game Studies course and learned a lot. I learned the different coding skills how to do graphical design and why writers write a certain way. I was in awe with everything this one little course had to offer, so you best believe I decided to switch over. When I went through the process, I got scared. What would be on offer to me with this choice? Would I be able to find work in an industry that had so many applicants? But most importantly, would my family approve of this? I always tend to overthink, but at this moment, I didn't look back. Albeit, I do wish the major had a different name, because going to a career fair a few weeks ago, I got looked at and given the cold shoulder, because of the name. But I keep telling myself if I put in the work, and if I put in the time, I will be successful with this major. So, here I am, hours put into courses needed to graduate and I am on the front doorstep of graduating. I do not regret it at all. I did take courses to get knowledge for coding and other types since my minor is in cyber security. I wanted to be sure all bases were covered.

What is the Video Game Industry?

The video game industry has gone strong since the 70s and has gone on to become a powerhouse in the entertainment world. But the thing that we generally don't talk about is how

the industry doesn't just create products that are for entertainment purposes, but also nuanced storytelling that a Hollywood movie just would not cover. Talking about mental health, tragedy, family matters, all these things covered in one industry. The only thing is that while it is nice to see this, everyone is not safe from the image of problematic workplaces. I want to highlight some works that cover the different aspects of the industry, a lot of it is going to be resolved in the area but should still be highlighted because it wouldn't feel right for things to be bright and shiny when all workplaces have a bit of roughness to them. For the first example, I will highlight the use of contractors for projects. What are contractors? Contractors are hired to work on one or two specific projects, once those projects are finished or canceled, they must seek work elsewhere or apply again for another project. This is highly beneficial for someone starting in the industry, but it didn't always sound nice from the beginning. In the readings by Natalie Kalbakian, she went through the studio Sledgehammer Games and found out that the workplace didn't value contractors as they did their full-time employees. The regulars would be asked not to get comfortable with them as they were "expendable" workers. "This note examines the video game industry as a case study for the potential impact of California Assembly Bill 5 ("AB 5") on industries that heavily rely on independent contractors with specialized skill sets." (Kalbakian,2020,1). There were investigations in Activision Blizzard, who own Sledgehammer Games because this went against union rights. But of course, now this isn't the case anymore, as workplaces have had to adapt to not let anyone feel left out. If you are working in the building, you have a place there.

Video Games used to be a subculture till now, where all releases are treated as if they're these huge events with the likes of Marvel or DC. It used to be a very niche thing, where the only way to participate was to trade an arm and a leg for how expensive the hobby was; this isn't the

case anymore, but for a time it was. “It will be shown that many of the cultural attributes of the traditional video game subculture are not adequately flexible to adapt to a mainstream majority culture- particularly not when considering many of the new casual/social gaming content strategies proposed as the future of the gaming medium and savior of the creatively ailing video game industry” (Zackariasson, 2012, 1). The reasoning for this is that no one could have predicted a bounce back for the industry, with how much money it rakes in annually. During the 80s, everyone thought that it could all come crashing down like dominoes, and it did. ET The Game was released, and it failed so badly that it caused the industry to collapse. Now we live in an age where one little game cannot cause a downfall like that.

Workplace stress exists in every workplace, no matter where you go, there is always going to be something wrong. In the video game industry, you are going to have to meet deadlines, and a lot of those deadlines are going to be within a singular year. This causes crunch, where people have to dig in and crank out milestones in a project within a certain amount of time so that they can meet the deadline of release windows. This is the current situation of the industry that has a bright light shining at it. According to Sky LaRell Anderson and Stephanie Orne, “Work-stress related disorders are increasing globally, primarily driven by emerging economic conditions that have placed overwhelming pressure on the labor force, both mentally and physically, such as increased work time per day.” (Anderson, Orne, 2022, 3134). Work stress exists and it is definitely something that needs to change, but seeing how passionate the industry gets is what keeps driving me to join in. I want to create meaningful things. I want to get awards with my creations, with hard work comes rewards. But I agree that this should not be an industry standard. Work-life balance also needs to be better between employers and the employee because they have taken advantage of their workers. “Current trends are gravitating

towards longer hours despite discussion over the last two decades about the importance of work-life balance. This would suggest that many employers are only paying lip service to the idea of achieving balance for their employees.” (Escudero, 2008, 20).

Video Games as Art

Video Games are an artform, and whoever says otherwise is incorrect. What goes into the creation is like an artist with a paintbrush, your computer is the canvas. It needs to be treated like films, with how important things are. “The term used in this article to refer to a broad category of videogames that try to make sense of human experience, address the complexity of personal and social lives, aim to represent emotions, psychological traumas, abstract concepts and habits of thought, and make these playable.” (Ruffino, 2022). The fact that we still have talks about the subject matter is a little concerning, especially since they are trying to get the recognition they so deserve.

Conclusion

I want to be apart of the industry. I learned a lot putting things together with my ePortfolio and want this to be something I build up over time. I hope that it gets packed enough to get recognition because I did a lot of work over the years to learn skills to feel like I would get here. I think that with time, this will be packed with content so that I can go to an interview and say here’s what I have done.

Citations

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ePortfolio: <https://sites.wp.odu.edu/zacharyportfolio/>