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00/ Abstract

“I wanna do a Kusoge” is an experimental multi-chapter game that deliberately challenges the conventions of gameplay, coherence, and meaning. The player controls a cat that meows and dies repeatedly, moving through a sequence of stark, deconstructed spaces. Each chapter systematically dismantles a different layer of traditional game structure—first through punitive platforming, then through illusion-based mechanics that cast doubt on perception, and finally through a near-complete withdrawal of interactivity.

Rather than aiming to deliver progression or rewards, the project centers on disorientation, mistrust, and observation. The final chapter invites the player to sit in silence and listen to emotionally charged music. No clear objectives are given, and no traditional ending is offered. Instead of presenting a narrative, the game offers a sequence of spaces designed to be experienced rather than completed.

This project does not attempt to decode the game, but moves alongside it—observing what happens when a cat jumps, fails, and meows again—and quietly asks why we keep pressing forward anyway.

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Declaration of academic honesty:

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01/ Introduction

The initial impulse to make this game didn't come from a concept, but from the indescribable emotions I've felt in some of the “very strange” games I've played. These games weren't necessarily fun, and were often confusing, absurd, and difficult to understand - but they created a “space” that allowed me to have an amazing experience that was somewhere between participating and watching.

That emotional friction piqued my interest. I began to wonder if I could make a space like that. A space simply carries a certain “atmosphere” that comes from my own personal experiences, memories, or emotions. I did initially envision a full narrative structure, but during development, and especially after the second chapter, I realized that any explicit plot would only break the ambiguity and continuity of the experience. So I gradually abandoned the story and began to focus on the relationship between pacing, space, atmosphere, and mechanics. The game went from being a work that was supposed to say something to being a structure that was left behind after the content was removed.

These intuitions eventually led me to refine the current work. It's not about trying to tell something, it's about trying to see: if I stop telling, will the players stay? And what would they do?

02/ Background and Research

Before delving into the chapter-by-chapter analysis of the project, this section outlines the broader conceptual and cultural context in which the game was developed. It begins by situating the work within the aesthetics and discourse surrounding *kusoge*—games that resist traditional design logic—and continues by reflecting on the guiding questions and intentions that emerged during the making of “*I wanna do a Kusoge*.”

2.1 / Kusoge and the Cultural Space of “Bad Games”

“Kusoge” (クソゲー), a Japanese slang term that literally translates to “shitty game,” was originally used to describe titles that were technically flawed, unpolished, or frustrating to play. When I first heard the word *kusoge*, I assumed it simply meant a bad game. But the more I encountered the term in niche forums, meme compilations, and video retrospectives, the more I realized it represented a strange form of affection. These games weren’t just mocked—they were remembered, replayed, and sometimes even loved.

There’s something fascinating about a game that fails all expectations but still makes you feel something. *I Wanna Be the Guy* or *Getting Over It* are prime examples of games that weaponize awkwardness. They turn broken mechanics into a form of expression—what Wilson and Sicart (2010) describe as “abusive game design”: an approach that deliberately introduces discomfort, confusion, or frustration to provoke reactions beyond mastery or pleasure. Also as noted in the *Northwest Asian Weekly*, even the worst games—commonly known as *kusoge*—can hold a place in people’s hearts, with players finding charm in their inherent flaws (Gruver, 2016). To me, *kusoge* isn’t a category—it’s an act, it’s a refusal to optimize or explain. And in that space, I found room for something much more interesting: uncertainty.

Game scholar Miguel Sicart later elaborates on this idea, arguing that such experiences challenge players to become critically aware of the systems they’re engaging with—not despite their brokenness, but because of it (Sicart, 2011). I wouldn’t say I’m trying to “abuse” the player, but I am certainly trying to resist the conventional rhythm of reward and coherence.

“*I wanna do a Kusoge*” was not created to imitate a particular game, but rather to inherit its anti-structural spirit. By stripping away direction, coherence, rewards, and meaning, the project invites the player into a system where interaction becomes uncertain, goals dissolve, and experience takes precedence over outcome.

2.2 / Anti-Narrative Games and Structural Play

During the process of making this game, I found myself increasingly drawn to the structural aspects of gameplay—its pacing, rhythm, space, and mechanics. As I went deeper in that direction, I eventually removed the narrative elements altogether. But that didn’t mean the game had no meaning—only that its meaning didn’t come from the story. It came from the structure itself.

Game scholar Gonzalo Frasca (2013) proposed a useful way of thinking: instead of understanding games as stories we consume, we might view them as systems we engage with. He argued that games are not merely narrative forms—they operate through their own internal logic, via rules, input, feedback, and loops. This helped me understand what I was building—not a story, but a situation, one where players navigate atmosphere and mechanics without any promised reward.

Viewed in this way, *kusoge*, whether intentionally or not, often arrives at a kind of systemic coherence. Despite their so-called failures in narrative or technical terms, they still manage to produce a felt experience that emerges through play. “*I wanna do a Kusoge*” shares this logic. It abandons guidance, optimization, and explicit goals, and instead constructs a structure that is ambiguous but internally complete.

2.3 / Research Direction

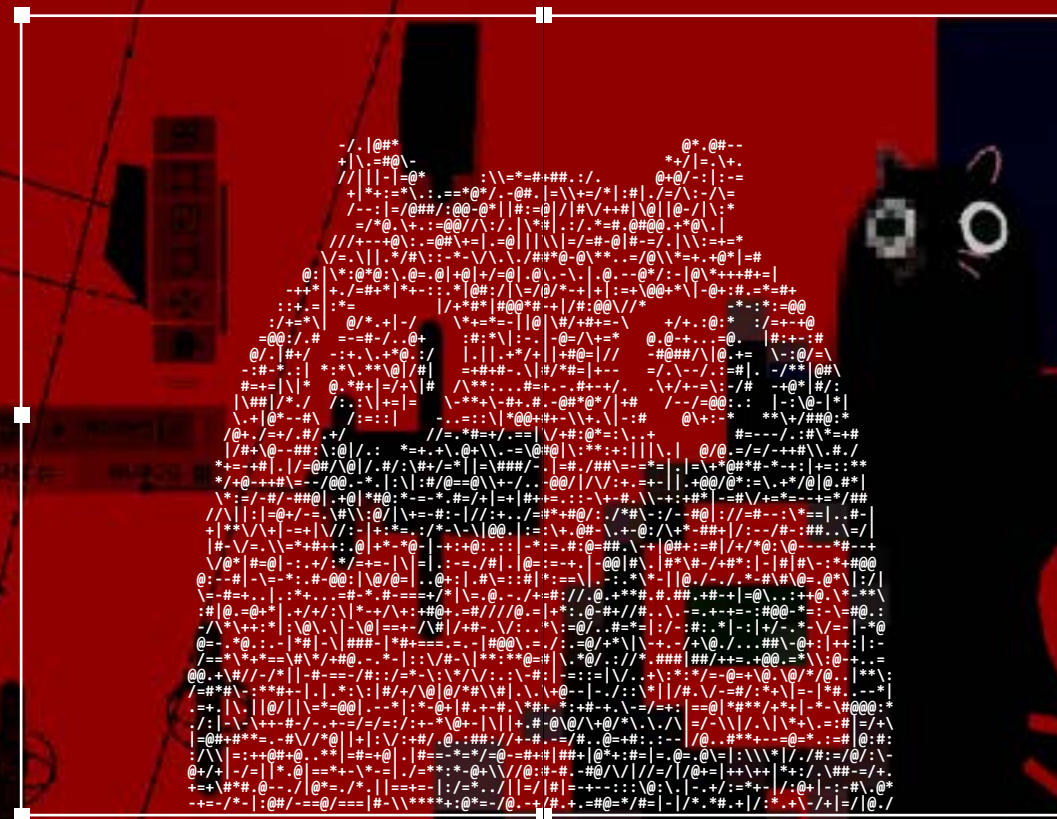
I did not create this game with a so-called “research question” in mind. It is not a work created to verify, analyze, or deconstruct some theoretical proposition, but more akin to a feeling-driven formal exploration.

However, in the process of creation, and especially in the process of gradually “removing” the game mechanics and story, I began to face some questions over and over again, questions that don’t need to be answered, but which constitute the implicit structure of my work:

- If a game no longer provides clear goals, rewards, and feedback, will players continue to play?
- How does player behavior change when there is no guidance, no narrative, and even failure becomes imperceptible?
- Is it the responsibility of the game designer to “guide the experience”? Does the designer create a more authentic perceptual space when he or she says nothing?

There are no standard answers to these questions, but they formed an internal part of my process. If there is a “research intent” to this project, it is probably to test whether players will try to establish their own order and interpretation in a system that has been de-structured, de-objectivized, and demeaned.

I wanna do a Kusoge



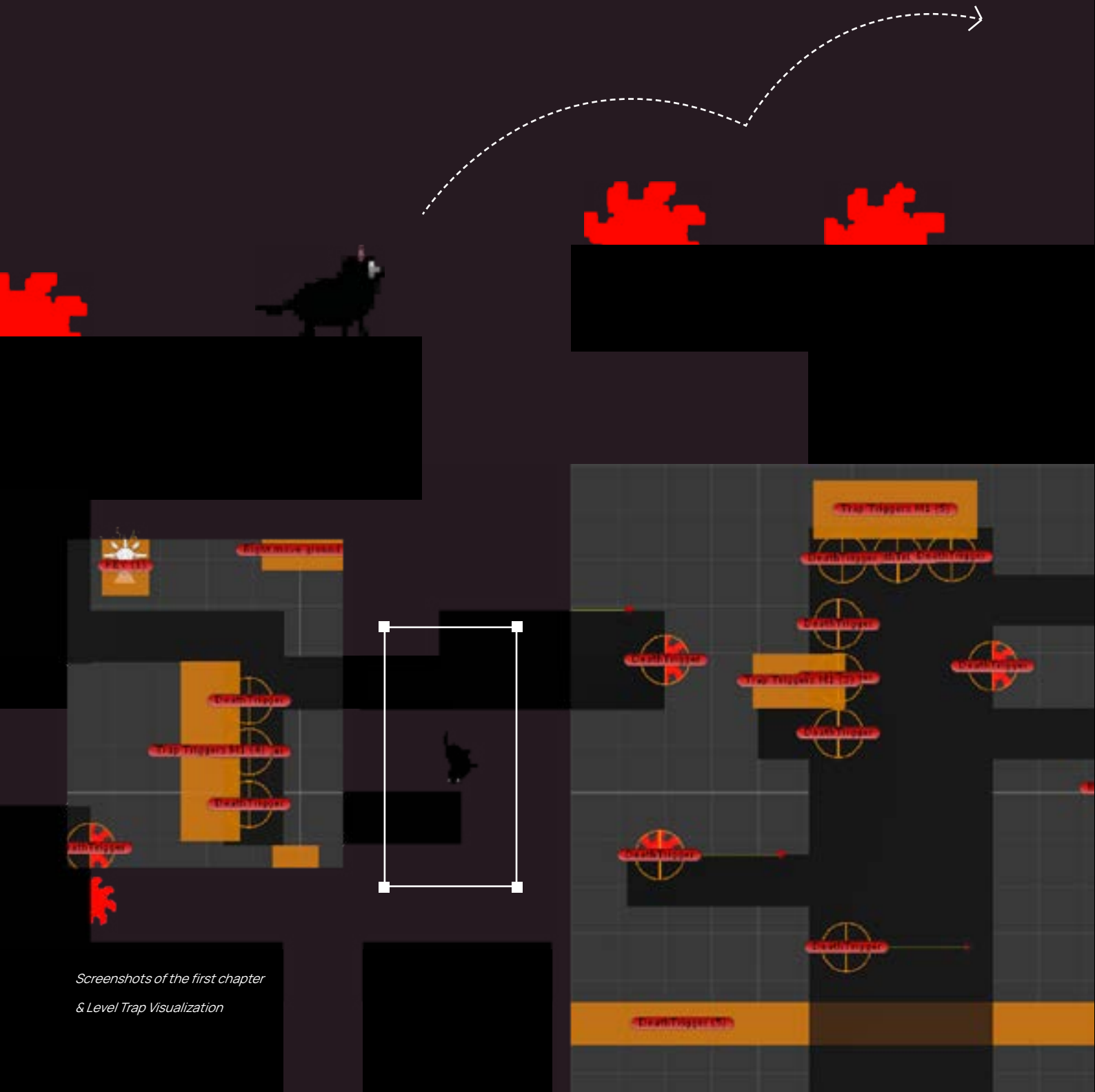
The project consists of three chapters, each reflecting a different level of structural dismantling—from mechanical challenge, to perceptual instability, to contemplative observation. The following section breaks down each chapter's design focus, spatial logic, and player experience.

****Considering all the images as just a reference,

in fact that you should not read this text but go straight to the game

3.1 / Chapter One - Old times

The first chapter of *I wanna do a Kusoge* introduces players to a stripped-down 2D platformer that draws heavy inspiration from games like *I Wanna Be the Guy*. It serves as a point of entry into the larger experience by immediately confronting the player with punitive difficulty, ambiguous platforming rules, and deliberate trial-and-error design. This level does not aim to teach or reward—it aims to frustrate, destabilize, and observe.



Screenshots of the first chapter
& Level Trap Visualization



It's just a super classic trap.

3.1.1 / Core Mechanic: Failure as Structure

The core of the first chapter is simply platformer through a space full of traps. Dying resets everything. While it's a simple design choice, the lack of forgiveness turns failure itself into the main mechanic.

The design is influenced by *I Wanna Be The Guy*, a platformer known for its unpredictable traps and absurd design, which breaks the logic of traditional gameplay expectations by allowing seemingly safe objects to kill the player, and by setting traps in anticipation of the player's "anticipation" to create surprises and emotional impact. It breaks the logic of traditional game expectations by having seemingly safe objects kill the player. The appeal is not in mastery, but in feeling and experiencing the individuality of each mapmaker.

In "*I wanna do a Kusoge*", I used a similar strategy to create a space where trust is the first victim. In a seemingly simple environment, every jump is a problem, and every death becomes part of the rhythm. Failing in a game makes us feel inadequate, but this inadequacy is also what makes victory meaningful (Juul, 2013).

The main character is a cat that rolls instead of running, moving in an awkward and ridiculous way, even turning 360 degrees in a 2D plane. Aside from interacting with save points, the only thing the player can control is the cat's basic movement. The game's death resurrection is very quick in order to facilitate the player being able to fail and try again and again. A death counter has also been added to keep track of every failure the player has.

Thus, the first chapter is not only a guide to the mechanics, but also an introduction to "mistrust and repetition".

3.1.2 / Visual Language and Atmosphere

The first chapter is called *Old Times* (though the game doesn't show the chapter title), and it serves not only as an introduction to the mechanics, but also as a nostalgic reference. For gamers of my generation, 2D platformers may be the earliest type of video games we have ever come into contact with, they are pixelated, difficult, demanding, and often without mercy. *Old Times* draws from this collective memory to transform it into a deliberately frictionless experience.

The entire first chapter consists of four mini-levels, and the visual design is intentionally minimal, using a limited number of deep black and harsh red elements. The color choices evoke a sense of danger and repetition. The pixelated style references early indie platformers, but loses the aesthetic elements and charm that a pixelated style should have. If you're hard pressed to find one thing with design in this chapter, it's the cat itself.

The environments are sparse and abstract. The entire chapter is filled with traps, collisions, triggers and death. This absence reinforces the feeling of isolation and focus - a void that can only be filled by the player's persistence. At the same time the soundtrack takes on a relatively relaxing style, attempting to counteract the extreme negativity.

Unlike later chapters, where the space becomes interpretive or emotional, the design of the first chapter feels mechanical and confrontational. It establishes a baseline where all initial interactions are uncertain and trying to move forward requires repeated trial and error. Even if one knows all the locations of traps, one can die from mishandling.

3.2 / Chapter Two - Between Layers

Chapter 2 is the most structurally complex chapter in the entire work. Instead of centering around a single area, as in the first chapter, it is split into four completely different spaces. They all share a common mechanic, the mask, but in each space this mechanic is reinterpreted into different rules and languages.

Mask is not an ability, it is more like the power to “choose what to see”. Turning it on or off brings different limitations and possibilities; the mask mechanic requires the player to constantly switch the state of perception, re-judging “what is real” and “what can be trusted” in the space, which makes the vision and judgment no longer stable, but always drifting.

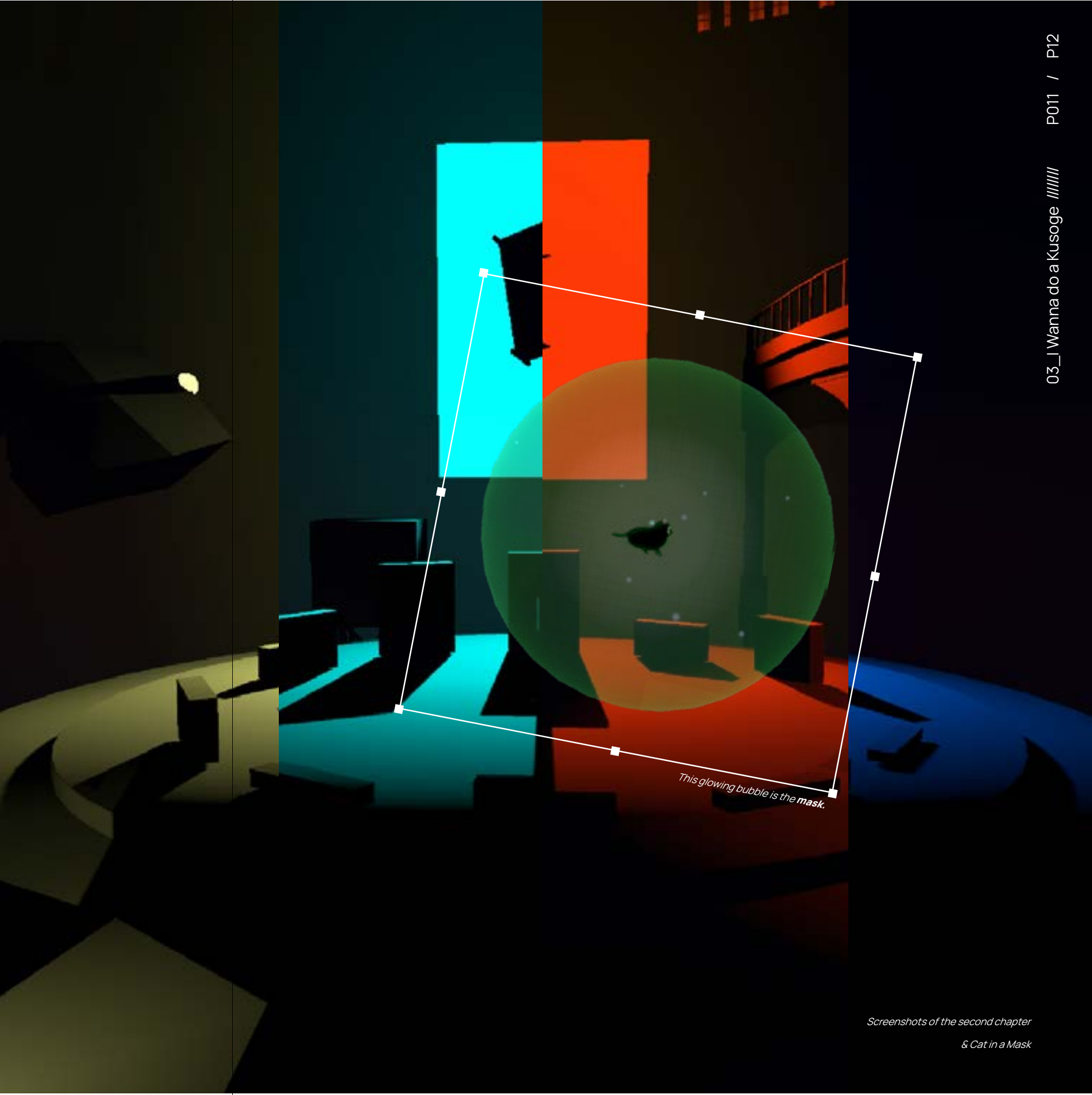
There are no clear story clues between the four spaces, but each area has a very strong emotional tendency and spatial logic. From the initial unchallenging *Safe house*, to the three distinctly challenging areas of *The Bed*, *The City*, and *That Dungeon*, the pacing of the second chapter is like an exercise in “perception” and “survival.” The pace of Chapter 2 is an exercise in perception and survival.

3.2.1 / Core Mechanics: Mask

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Screenshots of the second chapter
& Cat in a Mask



Screenshots of Safe House

3.2.2 /

Safe House

Chapter two begins with the main character falling into an unreal space, here called *Safe House*. In this first space there are almost no challenges and no enemies. It offers a sense of “safety”. Here the player encounters a meditating humanoid NPC, the only character in the game who can hold a short conversation.

Conversations with the NPC are very brief. The main character meows, and the NPC responds calmly, “If you’re looking for meaning, there’s no such thing.” This line is both a response to the player’s question and a footnote to the game as a whole.

The mask ability is also gained in this space. The player gains the ability to switch masks after touching another ball of light on the right side. Safe House does not offer any mechanical challenges; it is meant to set the pace and tone. It takes the player out of the punishing experience of the first chapter and puts them in a state of suspension: you don’t know what’s going to happen next, you just know you have a new tool, and it doesn’t tell you where or how to use it.

In terms of visual language, Safe House uses a uniform warm brown and yellow color palette, and the space seems to be in a state of weightlessness. Floating black stones, huge glowing screens and neutral colors of light and shadow create a minimalist yet psychedelic atmosphere. The overall

color scheme is soft and low-saturated, with no clear direction or implication, and this ambiguity further reinforces the feeling that “there are no rules here”.

The mood-guiding function of color is used here as a structural tool rather than a decorative element. As Angela Wright, a researcher in color psychology, points out, color is not only a trigger for evoking emotions, but also an important factor in the rhythm of perception and the way of concentration (Wright, 1998). The combination of dark colors and low saturation can create a calm, non-linear perceptual field, causing players to slow down their pace and enter a “meditative” state. This is in line with the functional intent of Safe House, which is to remove the player from the oppressive feeling of the first chapter, and to welcome the switch to a “space-as-puzzle” mode of perception.



Screenshots of The Bed

/ 3.2.3

The Bed

The Bed is the first challenge area in Chapter Two. The player arrives via a hidden path revealed by the mask in Safe House, and immediately enters a completely different state of perception.

The space is dominated by a cold color palette that is visually damp, clammy, and lacking in direction. A large number of cubes are distributed in mid-air in a floating and irregular manner. Many paths are obscured or interfered with, and the player must constantly determine which are viable paths and which are just illusions as they switch masks on and off. This structure deliberately breaks the expectation of “clear paths” in platformers, and leads the player into a state of constant questioning of “is that real”.

Layout-wise, the set in *The Bed* feels non-linear, with all platforms and spatial units arranged in a seemingly random but deliberate manner. This arrangement references the logic of fragmented dreams, in which we often jump around to

“understand” certain connections, rather than reaching them through rational reasoning. In terms of color, the interaction of cold light sources with the fluorescence from the mask spheres creates a semi-realistic flow, while the color combination creates a sense of “distance” and “ambiguity”.

The Bed’s name refers to sleep, but also suggests a space where “the boundaries of consciousness are blurred”. There are no enemies and no danger in the traditional sense. Players here master the use of the mask - you must switch it frequently to piece together the path to the next space.



Screenshots of The City



3.2.4 /

The City

The City is the most realistic area in Chapter Two. It simulates a distorted city, full of symbolic order and danger: signal lights, T-pose mannequins, neon signs, obvious pedestrian spaces, etc. These elements are still present but have lost their original function, leaving only a strange appearance and a constant uneasiness.

The space as a whole is illuminated by a strong orange-red light source, which contrasts dramatically with the cold tones of the previous area. This color combination is used to express urgency, warning, oppression and unease, and also mimics the harshness and agitation of the city's neon lights at night.

The biggest mechanic shift in this chapter is that the crowd kills the main character. For the first time, the player is confronted with "social-like" enemies - faceless, motionless, and mechanically following a predetermined path - that kill the main character as soon as he or she approaches or comes into contact with them. This design does not emphasize confrontation, but rather a symbolic "social gaze and rejection" that reinforces a psychological experience associated with social fear, alienation, and tension in the urban environment.

At this point, the role of the mask changes subtly. Instead of just "letting you see more", it becomes a way to "actively block out the crowd". Players need to switch masks frequently to avoid interacting with people. This operation is a metaphor for social strategy - how to be "visible" or "invisible" in public space, when to blend in and when to avoid.

Structurally, *The City* is still a platformer, but the jumps are more tightly paced due to the configuration of enemies and light sources. Instead of just searching for a simple path, the player needs to choose between the Mask energy that will be depleted and the constant stream of people that will appear. This pacing and space compression combine to create a "tight but you must move on" experience.

The City is not just a puzzle space. There are no clear-cut puzzles, but there is pressure to move forward. This pressure is not achieved by the difficulty of the mechanics, but by the construction of the space, the crowd mechanics, the color combinations, and the reversal of the mask.



Screenshots of That Dungeon

/ 3.2.5

That Dungeon

The final space in Chapter 2 is *That Dungeon*, a stylistic break from the previous space, as if suddenly entering another game. Broken brick walls, chains, monsters, and a boss battle all point to the "game" itself. The sense of "game" here is deliberately amplified, as if the player is in a highly refined symbolic space of "playing a game".

This space opens with a room with only a computer desk and roots, everything is covered with blue light, and the walls are covered with plants and strange branches. The visual language of this scene suggests a certain state of being "embedded in the structure of the game": the room is real, but it seems to have been completely consumed by the fantasy world of the game.

Once in the Dungeon, the mask mechanism changes again. In this space, the mask will work like a shield in a normal game, deflecting bullets fired by monsters. At this point, the mask is no longer just a cognitive tool, but an integral part of the

combat strategy. It requires the player to judge the timing of switching between them while moving at high speeds, and find a way to break through in boss fight.

The boss battles in this space are not complicated per se, but their significance lies in the shift in tone, as the confusion, depression, and escapism built up from the first few zones are suddenly transformed into a symbolic confrontation, with boss attacks and the mask's mechanics creating a rhythmic experience. It's no longer unsettling, but rather releases a certain emotion.

That Dungeon is an echo and counterpoint to the entirety of Chapter Two - it returns the game to a space that can be challenged and defeated again. But this victory doesn't lead to any plot advancement, and there's no real payoff; after the boss is defeated, the player simply moves on to the next room in silence, and as the light dims, the door to Chapter 3 opens quietly.

3.2 / Chapter Three- Somewhere Quiet

Chapter three is the quietest, most abstract chapter in the entire work, and it forgoes challenges, enemies, and even objectives, leaving only light, sound, and space itself. There is no failure mechanism in this chapter, the player cannot die, and there are no quests that must be completed. All interactions are centered around the stage, and the player can choose to sit and watch and listen, or just leave and move on.

This chapter feels like a sort of afterglow, a relaxation after all the questioning, struggling and sensory strain of the first two chapters. There is no clear meaning here, but it offers the possibility of "staying" - no longer to advance or to break levels, but simply to stop and watch and listen in a certain atmosphere.



Screenshots of the first third chapter



3.3.1 / Core Mechanics: Watch, Listen and Stay

Chapter three does away with all the traditional gameplay mechanics from the first two chapters: no enemies, no jumping challenges, no puzzle solutions. It retains only one thing - watching. And watching itself constitutes the entire "gameplay" of this chapter.

There are three stages in space, each activated by a light orb. When the player approaches and interacts with the orb, the corresponding stage is activated: the lights come on and the music starts. Players can choose to sit on designated benches to enter the viewer's perspective of the show, or remain on the prowl, leaving or switching positions at any time. Only one stage can be active at any given moment. When the current stage is activated, the other two will be automatically shut down. The player can choose between the light orbs, not in order to gain access to different resources or to progress through the game, but simply to adjust "what to watch". Each piece of music represents a specific emotional point in the game, but they don't carry a clear emotional direction or tell any storyline - they're just there to be heard.

By designing this mechanism, the third chapter no longer asks the player to "finish" something, but invites them to decide whether they want to stay or not. Watching becomes a choice, not a default behavior. Sitting down is a form of participation and leaving is also a form of expression. Interaction is no longer an end in itself, but a space for perceptual and emotional extension.

3.3.2 / Construction of quiet space

The design tone of the third chapter is minimalist, calm and abstract. The entire chapter is constructed in a wide dark space with a very restrained use of light. The three stages are distributed in different orientations, with guidance provided in the center through floating light orbs. The connection between the stages does not rely on traditional paths, but rather on the pull of the light source to establish a perceived 'direction'.

The stages maintain a general consistency in art style. Instead of using materials or structures that represent a certain "real world", they are composed of simplified blocks, columns of light, and symbols, deliberately maintaining a sense of abstraction. The construction of this non-narrative space refers to the structural logic of stage plays and light installations, each stage is like a figurative expression of an emotion.

The music is the real "protagonist" of this part. The three pieces of music represent a state of mind of turning, looking back and starting again. They do not serve as background sounds, but occupy the entire space - the lighting, the sound wave visualization system, and the Lumen visualization system all revolve around the rhythm of the music, constituting an immersive audio-visual experience. The choice of music also avoids obvious directionality, in order to allow the player to empathize in a "meaningless" atmosphere.

04/ Conclusion

“I wanna do a Kusoge” is an experiment in using failure, uncertainty and feeling as foundational elements of the game. From the high-intensity death density in the first chapter, to the perceptual switching and spatial judgment in the second chapter, to the viewing and listening gestures in the third chapter, the whole project gradually strips away the classic game framework of “goal-feedback-reward”, and builds a form of work that is generated by the player’s active experiential structure.

4.1 / Reflection

The most interesting experience in the creative process comes from the “loss of control” and “disconnection”. The final shape of many gameplays and scenarios is not clearly designed from the beginning, but rather a product of misuse, technical limitations, and personal feelings. For example, the mask was originally a tool for rendering environmental objects in a scene, but through trial and error it became a “visual strategy” or even a “social metaphor”.

I also realized that my definition of “game” was changing. It was no longer my way of controlling the world, but rather a practice of “making a world and then entering it”. Often I am not designing but waiting and discovering the logic of a space as it gradually reveals itself. Anyway it does show me another path of creation, a path centered on instability, watching and self-questioning.

4.2 / Further Iterations

Interestingly, in several playthroughs, the feedback from players was surprisingly “positive”: they said it was fun, especially the first and second chapters, and wished they were longer and more mechanically rich. I agree that they are relatively complete and coherent parts of the project, but at the same time I’m hesitant to extend them. Extension implies process, and that goes against my original “free mind” approach.

That said, I truly enjoyed making this game. Despite its broken parts, unstable ideas, and emotional shifts, the act of putting it together—layer by layer, glitch by glitch—was meaningful. Sometimes, I found myself laughing at my own design, or surprised by what emerged from accidents and side experiments. In that sense, it was fun. Not always, but often enough to matter.

This work does not originate from an idea that can be reproduced on a large scale, but rather from fragments of irregular feelings: an imagination of failure, a test of the way of seeing, a translation of the oppression of reality. These fragments were triggered and realized in the mood and circumstances of the moment. In another moment, I might not even be able to create something similar.

And maybe that’s the point. Rather than being the beginning of a product, this game feels more like the residue of a moment—something that was joyful to make, difficult to explain, and impossible to repeat. And I think I’d like to make more of that.

05/ References

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