Architecture in open world video games

Introduction to open world video games

In recent years, the Video game has already become an industry that can not be ignored. However, there are many debates about if video game is ninth art. But agree with Luke Pearson: “It is important not to focus on the arguments about whether video games are art, but as a more than $100 billion industry, video games clearly have some form of cultural impact on society.” Also, we need to acknowledge that there is more and more philosophical thinking on human nature, monster problems, politics and so on in modern video games, but as Jack Denham and Matthew Spokes said, 'critical appraisal of the game situates it clearly in broader discussions of video games as problematic, reductive and damaging.’ In the article, I will talk about what strategies game developers use for representing the real world, and how amazing the potential development of architecture in future video game world could be.

How open-world video games represent real world

Open-world video game means you could explore the world freely, but not in a linear play mode. In open-world video games, developers use many strategies to transform the real architecture into game architecture. For example in game Grand Theft Auto 5, players clearly know they are in a virtual version of Los Angeles, but how does the game developers make players feel it? what can architects learn from this phenomenon?

The city’s identified elements

Through observing my three friends playing open world video games and interviewing them, combined with my own experience playing games, I found that we all shared a very similar perspective on the open world video games; we tend to focus on what mainly showed in our screen most of time, but not on our whole travel experience, like we usually do in real world. In real world, everything occupies our senses, like touch, vision, smell, taste, hearing and so on. While, in the most important sense, vision, we do the same as we do in the video game, focus on what attracts us most.

In the classic works of city planning, (The Image of the City), Kevin Lynch summarize five identified elements that influence people most when they observe the city. ‘They are paths, the streets, sidewalks, trails, and other channels in which people travel; edges, perceived boundaries such as walls, buildings, and shorelines; districts, relatively large sections of the city distinguished by some identity or character; nodes, focal points, intersections or loci; landmarks, readily identifiable objects which serve as external reference points.’

When I apply Kevin Lynch’s real world theory to research my topic, I found in open world video games, the paths of the above five elements is the most realized in reality. No limitation architecture is not a dream, just as people put on a set of Simulating senses gear, people could get feedback feeling of what they do in game world synchronously. So then that game world becomes not just a game but a world. People confuse virtual and real gradually. In the meantime, the architecture in future game world could have no limitation after we have further technology exploitation, then, architecture could be very fancy or unpredictable. Buildings could have no budget limit, structure constraints, laws of nature limits, status limits and so on.

Conclusion

Clearly, open world video games developers know exactly how player take in information from city, not only from city planning but also from the creation of urban atmosphere, like pedestrians, cars, weather and so on. Kevin Lynch’s theory about how people get information from real city has also been proven correct and practical in virtual city. Looking to the future, architecture in virtual open game worlds will become the pioneers of realistic architecture revolution, because with development of technology, every impossibility will become possible, all buildings realized in the virtual game world will eventually be realized in reality. No limitation architecture is not a dream, just as people used to dream flying in the sky before Christ, but now you could not only take a plane but also wear a flying equipment.

How architecture will develop in future game world

With the development of virtual reality technology, many portable virtual simulation devices now are created, like VR headset. Also, in architecture world, many 3D model software already supported people observing and entering the model by wearing VR headset. Given this virtual technology development trend, what will happen to architecture in future video game worlds?

Bibliography

9. Screenshot from movie <Ready Player One>