FINAL REFLECTION

Your name: Thomas Killen (n4741374)

Project name: Shardup Hunt (previously Ghost Captor (previously Ghost Scanner))

What was your main role?

My role in the Shardup Hunt focused on the integration and use of the ARToolkit library and the general game logic. Additionally, much of the concept design and game specifications were developed by me, especially those defined during the early stages of the production process. In addition to ARToolkit programming and game logic, I undertook much of the OpenGL specific work, such as fiddling with the transformation matrices and the like, in order for our characters to move relative to the markers in a manner controlled by us whilst still using the tools provided by the toolkit. The reason for this is because the toolkit does not seem to easily lend itself to interactions where the objects that are “attached” to an ARmarker need to move relative to their own marker, the camera, and the markers in their vicinity all at the same time.
During the first half of development, it would be reasonable to say that I was the lead developer as that was the period during which the ARToolkit was being understood and integrated, and when the game logic was being defined. During the second half of development, the focus shifted to improving the game experience, which was more Dean’s area, so he took up the lead role and I moved into a supporting position. However, the team roles were quite flexible and we both worked on both areas of the game with a team attitude rather than a hierarchy of control.

What opportunities did you see that this project could provide you?

I am really quite fascinated by the possible modes of interaction that are opened up by technologies such as the ARToolkit and I fully intend to pursue further developments with this, or similar, technologies – in fact there is already another project at the beginning of the production process that makes use of the toolkit. Additionally, this game provided me with a chance to practice my game programming skills for a scenario that is quite unlike any other that I have seen.
I am excited by the prospect of having this project displayed for a time period in Melbourne in a game hosted by the ACMI. I am a regular fan of the works displayed around federation square and especially those presented by the ACMI, so to be part of such a project is a somewhat surreal experience.

What did you learn about your practice (processes and methods) while collaborating on SCOOT?

I found a lot more confidence in my skills over this project. I think it would be quite fair to say that initially Dean and I under-estimated the amount of time that would be required to develop this project completely using an unfamiliar technology. The fact that the capabilities of the technology were unfamiliar meant that the initial design of the actual program and its requirements were hazy which resulted in a program that works quite well, but that is not entirely adherent to general programming principles. Had more time been available, I would have been in favour of rewriting large parts of the program to make the components more generic and reusable, not to mention understandable for an outsider. As there is still some time until the actual Scoot game, I intend, and believe that Dean accepts this as well, to rewrite those components that I have issue with. This is not to say that these components don’t work, they do, but, as I have indicated previously, I would like to develop further projects with the ARToolkit so it makes sense to have program components that are extensible into other projects.

Generally speaking however, I think that this game is highly original and I am very pleased with the final outcome. I look forward to hopefully seeing it in action during the Scoot game.

How did the SCOOT team assist you with the development of your work?

The Scoot team was integral to the development of this final product. The suggestions that came up during the consultation sessions, and the inspiration that arose from the general Scoot aesthetic, were what defined the Shardup Hunt. Also, in terms of this subject as opposed to previous units, this unit allowed a high level of freedom of movement and exploration that was conducive towards the creation of truly creative and high quality works.

Do you have any desire to work in the games industry?

My career aspirations are firmly rooted within the game industry. I enjoy, and am passionate about, games programming and design.

If so, what kind of games?

I am very interested in original forms of interaction. I think the potential of augmented reality is quite unrealized and will be a growing genre of entertainment over the coming years. Mainstream consoles seem to be taking up aspects of AR, such as the Nintendo Wii and the new Playstation's capabilities of motion detection, and the numerous examples that exist of games that use image recognition.
Aside from AR based games, I am also very interested in the possibilities allowed by MMO's. Whilst not an MMO player myself, I believe that this type of game will also expand massively over the coming decade. Additionally, the concept of building worlds appeals to my ego, and I feel that they afford a lot of room for artistic exploration, and certainly social commentary.

What do you find interesting about the potentials of Location Based Game Design? (or limits?)

I enjoy the way that they are so short lived. Each location based game of the order of Scoot would become an city-wide event that is remembered for years, rather than most games which are forgotten after months. Their ability to engage multiple audiences and encourage them to explore their own world is an interesting inversion of the way most developments in gaming technology has discouraged real, physical, social interaction.