Mental Health Representation in Video Games

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Abstract : Contemporary media offer a variety of themes for the diverse tastes of their audiences. The Digital games medium was mostly perceived as an instrument of entertainment. But being a part of global trends while constantly pushing the boundaries of storytelling in virtual reality and standing on the edge of technology also brings huge responsibility for game designers around the globe. A very recent emerging topic over the last years was an individual's mental state. In recent years there has been a shift in mental problems representations in commercial game releases such as Hell blade: Senua's Sacrifice and Sea of Solitude. The aim of this study is to research the approach of mental illness representation in media and digital games over the years and to suggest alternatives for putting characters who suffer from mental illness at the forefront of the storyline. This study traces dominant representations of characters with mental illness in digital games, reflecting the major change of the game industry toward inclusiveness. At the same time, the research embraces a hybrid approach to the academic study of digital games and includes the development of a game that follows a post-traumatic young girl, forcing the users to live her life through her eyes. The game prototype was developed as part of the Mdes Game Design and Development program and consisted of academic research and game development practices.
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