ASTRALIS

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INTRODUCTION

ABSTRACT

Astralis is an interactive visual novel that explores a society divided. Throughout the game, you are introduced to characters that welcome you into their community and share insight about the conflicts that have come to exist within the city of Astralis. Our project employs choice to highlight pressures of conformity, placing emphasis on the ability one person can have to evoke change.

RESEARCH

OPPOSITION

    Astralis is a divided society. Their conflict is derived from many factors which inlcude history, inequalities, imbalances of power and more. An essential part of the discrepancies between the Wiran and the Drey is that neither side is inherently better than the other. They simply differ in their motivations and future plans for Astralis. In order to create such motivations, we looked into political polarization and the ideology behind opposition. When it comes to identification amongst political parties, most individuals utilize potential negative impacts of the opposing party to inform their decisions rather than the potential good of their affiliated party. Our story follows suit in this way as the Drey and the Wiran are most concerned with the possibility of the other coming into too much power, and how this would alter Astralis, but more importantly their respective ways of life.

INDIVIDUAL VOICE

One of the main themes that we looked into when developing our story was individuality and a person's ability to evoke change. When thinking about this, one can draw a comparison to voting systems in America and the frustrating thought that your individual vote does not matter. The United States utilizes a "winner take all" system of voting with the Electoral College Process. This contributes to an overall sense of voter disillusionment that causes most individuals to rally support behind the presidential candidate of a particular party as the electoral vote takes precedence over the majority. In this instance, the ability to inflict change may feel drastically limited, however Americans are encouraged to vote anyways. "Ask yourself: In this scenario, how can things get better?". The choice offered to you at the end of our story draws on the same question. If you choose to, you have the ability to make Astralis better, however much like in politics, in your silence, decisions are made for you.

AMERICAN POLITCS

Though our intention with *Astralis* is not to be reflective of American politics, there are aspects of our story that draw on the negative impacts of the two party system. In addition to the final choice at the end of our story, this also includes similarities between the Drey / Drey and Conservative / Liberal ideals. This is most evident in the class imbalance created through the Drey system of education and the Wiran pursuit to create equal opportunity through their implementation of electricity. Much like in the United States, the lack of a multiparty system has stifled societal growth, limiting both groups from realizing their potential to work together.

VISUAL RESEARCH

In the early stages of development, we created a shared mood board to collect ideas for color, mood, style, and references that would help shape *Astralis*. Since conformity was a big theme we wanted to explore, we were interested in designing characters that were given information strictly based on shapes and what they wear in order to emphasize the loyalty the members have to each of their respective groups.

Below are the moodboards we created, pulling images mostly from pinterest. This is when we decided the Wiran would be very steampunk inspired, with rudementary technology that was developed in a magical world. The show *Adventure Time* has a simplistic cartoon style with bright colors, yet, some episodes deal with really heavy themes. It became a leading source of inspiration for both the style and story developmet of *Astralis*.

VISUAL RESEARCH
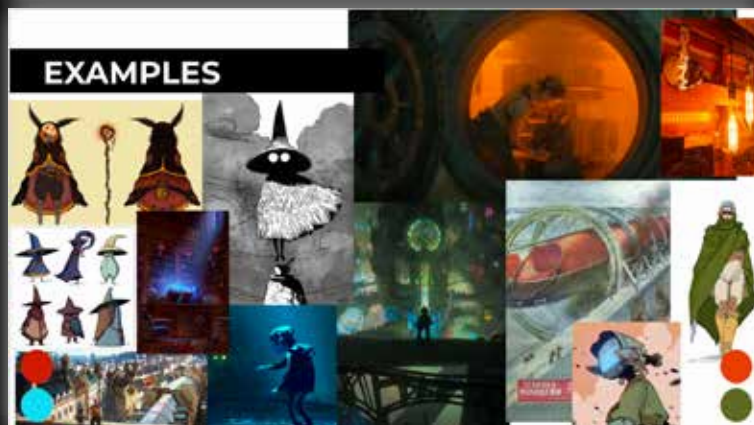
Drey Mood Board

DEVELOPMENT

STORY

During our initial brainstorming for this project, we were inspired by the tools of perspective and bias that arise in storytelling. With this in mind we started to create a world that was divided, with neither being 'right or wrong' but polarized in ideology, values, and structure. Thus, the city of Astralis was born with its inhabitants; the Drey, proponents and scholars of magic and the Wiran, inventors who envision a new future for their city through the development of technology.

Your role in *Astralis* begins as a traveler making your way through the forest when a friendly older man offers to take you to Astralis. Upon spending some time with him you learn more about his people, the Drey and their history. As you continue on your journey you are introduced to the Wiran and the Citali, a mystical power source sought after by both sides. Through you're navigation of this city and knowledge collected throughout your journey, you find yourself face to face with the Fomori, the wise guardian of the Citali. With access to unvvlimited power and your newfound friends behind you, you are forced to assess your role in the story of *Astralis* and the opportunity at your fingertips. **What would you do with the future of a city in your hands?**

OVERVIEW & HISTORY

Astralis is an interactive visual novel that explores the ideas of polarization and individuality through the main character's journey of a divided city. Astralis, once a united city, has been torn in two sides; the Drey and the Wiran. The Drey are proponents and scholars of magic, believing that it is a privilege and gift to dedicate the long years of study to learn and master the art. Above all, the Drey value their ability to connect with nature, utilizing their spells to support and enhance the world around them. Their society encircles all that Astralis used to be, however it's reliance on magic favored those who had the means to go to school and learn to become better sorcerers. Those who couldn't,

fell to the bottom of society. Through this early separation, the Wiran were born . Fifty years before you show up, the Wiran split from the Drey after Edward Zaurak, a once notable scientent amongst the Drey, discovered electricity. He said it could bring society closer together, a believer that the magic and the education system that taught it wasn't equal for everyone. Many hated this invention and what it represented. Now considered disgraced by the Drey, Zaurak and those that agreed with him formed the Wiran and began developing their new way of life centered around electricity.

      Shortly after, the Drey discover that the Wiran are searching for the Citali, a mythical power source which provides infinite ability to whomever wields it . Disagreements of who has rightful ownership divided communities for centuries until it mysteriously disappeared several years ago. Rumors of individuals seeking out the power, and how it should be utilized now drive the Drey and the Wiran further apart. . The Drey believe they are entitled to it, and want it because it could help them unlock magic that has never been seen before. The Wiran want it to fuel the power grid they are developing which could push them into a golden age of invention and rival the Drey. Neither wish to share, and how each plan to use it makes it so they couldn't. This is where the player/main character comes in. They stumble into Astralis, meeting both Drey and Wiran and ultimately befriending both, learning about both sides' stories, becoming entangled in the history of Astralis. MC ends up on a quest to find the Citali and in the end is forced to decide it's fate, a choice that WILL change the future of Astralis forever.

ALTERNATIVE ENDINGS

The choices presented to you in both the beginning and end of our story are meant to add to the various themes present throughout and your autonomy as an individual new to Astralis. In one of the first few scenes you are given the option to spend more time with Arthur who teaches you even more about the Drey and their relationship with the Citali. In choosing to do this you gain more information that could potentially impact your perception of the Drey throughout the rest of the story. If you chose not to go with Arthur however, you meet Billy and Oliver earlier and have the Citali explained to you as they see it. You're decision here draws on your curiosity as a player and your willingness to learn about this new city you've fund yourself in. The next set of choices comes at the end of the story

Don't Take the Citali
By not taking the Citali, you avoid the implied pressure of having to make this decision. Nonetheless, in the absence of your voice, a decision is made for you. The Citali is found by Billy and Oliver and its power falls to the hands of the Wiran.

Take the Citali for Yourself
In taking the Citali for yourself, you wield all of the power and capabilities that it provides. Despite this however, you learn that the conflict between the Wiran and the Drey exists beyond just disputes over ownership of the Citali. In time such polarity persits as it becomes even harder to imagine a time when Astralis was't split in two.

Use the Citali to Help Astralis
If you chose to bring the Citali back to your newfound friends, the four of you work together to figure out a way to divide it's power. You decide to evoke change as the Fomori intended, celebrating the strengths of both sides in pursuit of a future where the Drey and Wiran live in harmony.

FINALE 1 - DESC OF SCENE

FINALE 2 - DESC OF SCENE

FINALE 2 - DESC OF SCENE

PLOT BREAKDOWN

1 - Woods

You meet Arthur, a friendly Drey, who takes you to Astralis.

2 - Market

In the market you meet Claire, Arthur's granddaughter. A fight breaks out and you are introduced to the tension between the Drey and Wiran.

3 - Academy

After leaving the market, Arthur gives you a little history of the Drey and their way of life.

6 - What Are YOU Doing Here?

In the woods, you stumble into Claire and learn how Oliver and Claire have vhistory.

7 - Camp

You decide to make camp for the night, and the old friends catch up and they discuss the legend of the Fomori.

7.5 - Dream

That night you have a strange dream of caves and glowing eyes.

10 - CHOICE Take or Leave

CHOICE - The Fomori offers you the Citali and you decide to accept or not.

F1 - Don't Take Citali

In this ending, you hear how the Wiran found the Citali first and how this affected the fate of Astralis.

10.5 - Take for Yourself Or for Astralis

CHOICE - If you accept the Citali, you are presented with another set of choices. What do you do with the Citali?

3 - CHOICE

CHOICE - At this point, you can choose if you wish to learn more about the Drey or go off on your own (which takes you to 5).

4 - Arthur Home

If you go with Arthur, he tells you about the Citali, the legendary power source that has accelerated the polarization between the inhabitants of Astralis.

5 - Wiran City

You wander off and meet Oliver and Billy, Wiran who invite you to go on their search for the Citali.

8 - Camp Again

You awake to find Claire also awake. She warns you about the dangers in the woods.

9 - Cave Entrance

You decide you need a walk to clear your head. You discover a cave that pulls you in.

10 - Fomori

In the cave you find the Fomori. He retells his story and why he took the Citali from humanity.

F2 - Take Citali For Yourself

In this ending, you learn how without the Citali, the animosity between the Drey and Wiran heightened.

F3 - Give to Astralis

In this ending, you and your friends decide to try and make Astralis better by using the Citali to bridge the divide between the Drey and Wiran.
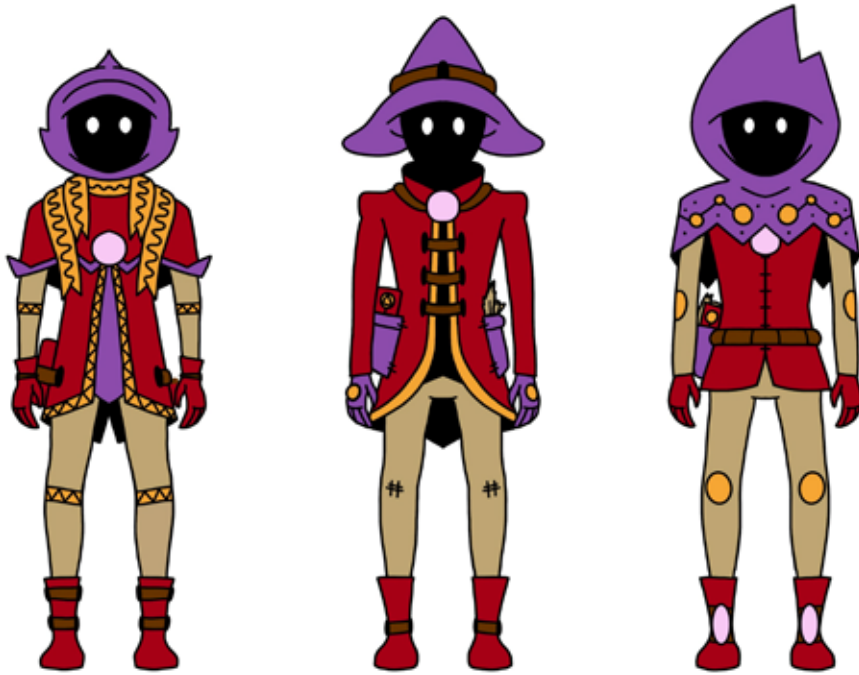
CHARACTERS

Our creative process with *Astralis* began with the character designs. The two illustrators on our team worked together to visually design a world and its people; one where two opposing groups blended together naturally. We researched various genres of fantasy including magical and technological elements. This is when the idea of only having eyes as facial features was explored and developed. With simplistic facial features, we could develop a sense of mystery in the characters and subtly demonstrate how, underneath their differing outfits, they are the same people.

Throughout the creative process, we split the designs of each factionm (magic and tech) between our two illustrators. The illustrators first conceptualized the characters in their own styles and methods. The two then brought the concepts to the team and discussed elements of each art style to keep, remove, and modify. This method proved effective in the final designs for the Drey and Wiran. The designs are different enough to resemble two different groups of people, but similar enough to believably exist in the same world. Once the character designs were completed, the illustrators pursued different tasks for the project.
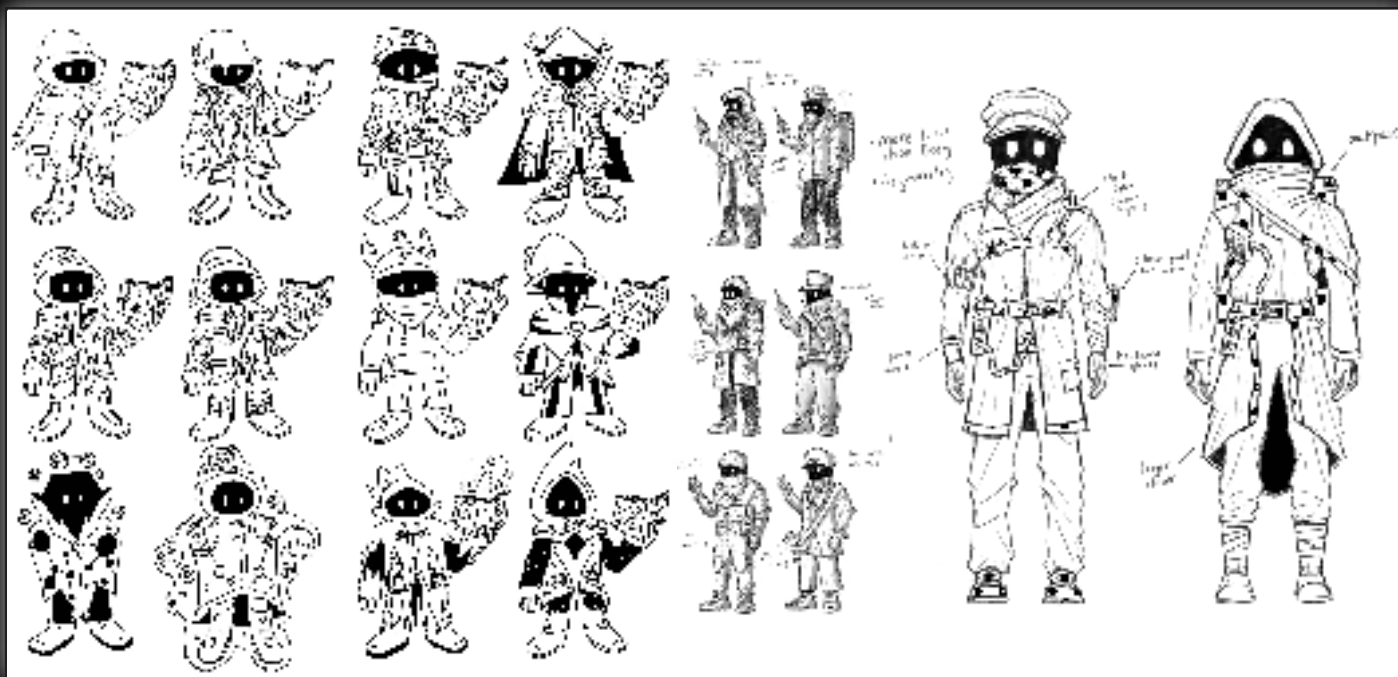
CHARACTERS

Drey Townspeople

Wiran Townspeople

CHARACTERS

Arthur - Arthur is a jolly old man who is the kind-hearted grandfather of Claire. He loves to share his knowledge and wisdom of his people, the Drey, with anyone who gives him the time of day. However, he is overly traditional in values and does not understand why the people of Astralis would surrender magic for technology. As such, he can come off as slightly bigoted towards the Wiran.

Claire - Claire is a spunky young adult who strives to be the best. She works hard as Arthur's granddaughter to uphold the Drey legacy and to become one of the greatest magic-users to ever live in Astralis. Though she does genuinely care for others, she can sometimes come off as egotistical and snobby. Regardless, Claire is always quick to apologize and admit when her self-centered actions go too far.

CHARACTERS

Oliver - Oliver is a clever and passionate perfectionist who puts all of his effort into his inventions. He is constantly coming up with new and wacky ideas that he loves to test on others, especially his little brother. Though he can sometimes seem like a bit of a know- it all, he is a good natural leader and looked up to by many younger generations of Wiran.

Billy - Billy is a curious and witty kid. He looks up to his Dad and older brother and hopes to be just like them when he growns up, though he'd never admit say it out loud. Billy is eager to start working on real invnetions although for now he likes playing with his trains and dragging Oliver along on silly adventures.

CHARACTERS

The Fomori - The Fomori is an ancient being that has been around through the rise and fall of numerous civilizations. It's objective has always been to nurture and guide humanity towards a better future. However, when people discovered the Citali, he found it caused division and opposition, leading to conflict and destruction. Ultimately, he decided to withhold the Citali and hide away in a remote cave. He is old a caring creature, ancient and wise from his many years, who at wanting nothing more than to help humanity develop.

ENVIRONMENT

In approaching the design of backgrounds, considerable preparation was planned in order to account for factors such as perspective, scene composition, character interactions, parallaxing, scale, and balance of detail. Firstly, background dimensions were determined by the amount of movement utilized in each scene, with larger backgrounds required when the player would walk or look around. Since each scene with dialogue places characters at a similar distance from the player, a general sense of scale was applied to the backgrounds, with careful consideration so that characters would fit well into their environment, not seeming too big or small. With scenes such as the Drey Academy and the Wiran City, heavy use of perspective was utilized to make buildings further back feel appropriately sized, while drawing software that included perspective rulers and guides streamlined this process. In more organic backgrounds, mainly the woods and cave scenes, simplified structuring of rocks, trees, and bushes were used to provide a less rigid and more stylized feeling to the scenery. In certain scenes, elements were layered in order for a parallax effect to be utilized, giving such scenes more depth. This is done by having assets closer to the player move at a quicker rate than assets that are farther away.

Additionally we decided to make several quality backgrounds over a large number of simple backgrounds, as we determined that providing detailed illustrations that capture the essence of Astralis would allow the player to feel more immersed. The Wiran City and Drey Academy in particular were important to get right, as they showcase the core values and lifestyles of the two sides.

ENVIRONMENT

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CODE/UI

Astralis was developed using Ren.py, an opensource visual novel engine. After doing much research, it was determined this was the best application to use due to it's variety of tools and it's easy to learn visual coding language. With choice being a big focus of our project, we wanted the audience to feel like they had say in the story, or the option at least the option to influence it. While the game is fairly rigid in it's narrative structure, there are a few crucial points where the players choice alters the narrative thus affecting the information they gather and the fate of Astralis.

MUSIC

Music plays a very important role creating the unique aesthetics of both the Wiran and the Drey and the other locations throughout this visual novel. In addition to sound effects there are a total of five other songs that play throughout including the Astralis Theme, Woods Song, Drey Theme, Wiran Theme, and Cave Song composed by Kyle Smith and Emmet Munterich. The songs were composed on Logic Pro with mainly various synthesizers and guitars. Through these instruments our songs are able to find a unique sound to match the fantastical and cosmic aesthetic of the Drey and the progressive techno ambience of the Wiran City. As you move along your journey these songs change with each environment and help us amplify all of the interesting parts that make up Astralis.

CONCLUSION

Astralis is a collaborative project that successfully encapsulates the goals and aspirations of our group. We envisioned a unique environment filled with magic, mythical creatures and lively characters and created a world with all this and more. Through discussion and feedback our story, script and designs saw lots of revisions to better reflect the themes and visuals we aimed to convey. Our final interactive visual novel is the accumulation of all of our creative strengths and a project we are proud of.

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