

The Divide

CS427

Anna Bui

Maddy Wikstrom

Trina Armitage



Project Statement:

In modern television, drug trafficking is a glorified lifestyle, so we wanted to show the dark reality of it. We wanted to show that people are joining the drug ring because they need to survive and help their family survive. In the process of drug trafficking, they risk overdose/addiction, being incarcerated, and being killed or hurt just to provide for their family. According to CRF.org “Mexican law enforcement and the military have struggled to curb crime-related violence. In 2018, the number of drug-related homicides in Mexico rose to 33,341, a 15 percent increase from the previous year—and a record high.” This further states that illegal drug trade is one of the main causes of death in Mexico, and in many cases people are just trying to provide for themselves and family.

Development and Research:

The topic given to us was Illegal Drug Trade. Our initial idea was a tunnel because those are used to smuggle the drugs into the U.S. After meeting with the Professors, we found that our idea may not work well in the cave, so we did more research. Through our research, we found that cartels provide 80% of the meth sold in the United States, so we decided to focus on the Mexican drug war. Digging further, we found that most of the people in the Mexican cartel have no choice, but to join due to their

circumstances. They often come from poverty and need a way to support their families. Drug trafficking to America makes a lot of money and continues to exist because there is a huge demand for drugs, so that is why we put America at the end of the journey.

Interaction:

The beginning of the game, quotes are falling from the sky representing words their family is telling the user such as “Don’t join the cartel”, but also contradicting things like, “We’re going to starve to death.” We surrounded the user in these quotes to make them feel cornered and pushed to the edge. Eventually the user’s only option is to cross the edge and join the cartel. As they fall into the scene they are immediately thrown into violence, can hear loud gunshots, and are surrounded by drugs all emitting particles such as “Meth”, “Heroin”, “Marijuana”, etc. The user can toss the drugs upwards, and if they toss enough drugs some will land where the families quotes are located, signifying that the user’s actions have a direct effect on their family. Once the user makes it to the Mexican/American border they have to cross a river that is polluted with water contamination and is surrounded by water contamination particles. Finally, as the user “enters” America they are greeted ininitially by money, but then are faced with the cost of “drug addiction” and “drug overdose”.

Acknowledgement:

The Divide was created for CAVE2, a virtual reality visualization environment at the University of Illinois at Chicago. A special thanks to Anna Bui, Maddy Wikstrom, and Trina Armitage for the efforts and contributions on this project. The idea of the user being a cartel member and having to choose between supporting their family by being in the cartel or not was a combination of Anna and Maddy’s proposal. Maddy was responsible for the particle system on the typography, assigning sounds and textures throughout the scene, and modifying the landscape. Anna Bui really brought the project to life by creating all of the typography objects through Maya Autodesk, creating textures for the typography, adding in unique animations,

programmed the backend functionality for user interaction, and created the title *The Divide*. Trina was diligent when showing up to group meetings and providing extra support/feedback. She also created the final video trailer. A final thank you to our instructors Daria Tsoupikova, Andy Johnson, and Jeff Nyhoff, as well as IBMs continued support.



