

The Pluimer Complex

Game Design Bible

“Observe, Learn, Adapt, Reflect.”

By Alex(andria) / Shoebby

Summary

The player inhabits the person of an apartment complex's surveillance AI, installed by a regime that has since been toppled that has left you forgotten.

With a master long gone you simply watch the day-by-day lives of the folk that live 'inside of you'.

Gradually your systems degrade by lack of maintenance. This continues until, eventually, you shut down.

The Mind Palace

The Mind Palace is the AI's core, meant to be an area for the tech-spirit to rest, recreate, and even hibernate for long periods of time if needed.

The player experiences this as a digitized hub area that gradually breaks down along with the PC. It hosts a few key menus and might even grant the PC a way to walk around, if only in a digital environment of their own making.

Humans are compassionate creatures, and following the invention of conscious AI, the well-being of these artificial creatures has become imperative to many of even the regime. For if you bring a sentient being into existence, would it not be a most monstrous thing to never grant them even the slightest bit of leisure?

The Self

The Self is an avatar of sorts, seen by none but the PC themselves. This creator starts extremely simple, offering limited choice in things like gender, skin color, hairstyle, based on pre-programmed regime propaganda.

Throughout the game the player unlocks more options though, based on the folk they encounter and observe. Things like pronouns, sexuality, and hobbies are added.

Even abstract concepts like fears and family bonds will make an appearance, turning the character creator more bloated and complex, but in turn more human as well.

This inevitably leads to the loss of this data due to storage damage, here the player will be able to select only a few aspects to isolate in their core drive for safekeeping, leaving all other parts to be lost and forgotten immediately due to how artificial memory works.

The Library of Norms

The PC learns about the intricacies of human interaction, starting with surface-level knowledge like what people look like and that humans have names.

Gradually the player unlocks encyclopedia entries about the more abstract aspects of human behavior, adding character creation options to the PC's avatar.

The Observatory

Here the PC starts the day's observation of its tenants.

The Phone

A direct line to the regime. An eerie quiet hangs over this line.

The Complex

The apartment complex is a 3-story building with 8 units on every floor. Its walls are thin, its pipes are leaky, and maintenance in general is done only rarely.

Despite these challenges the tenants are a relatively tight-knit community, especially the longer-lived tenants that lived through the revolution here together.

The player can view only a limited number of apartments every time they view the complex. This number changes throughout the experience, based on the degradation of the PC's systems.

Tenants

Every apartment houses 1-2 adults, a potential 1-3 children, and pets aren't allowed by the property manager. Variation in this would have to be done illegally, and would mean that the tenant(s) risk eviction.

Tenants live out their lives in what they believe is privacy, showing their most intimate, disgusting, and ordinary moments so that the PC might fathom the intricacies of human behavior.

Tenant Portraits

Tenants aren't completely visible to the player, seemingly highly abstracted in their portraits. This is an intentional design in their programming, as to prevent excess compassion for the tenants and to prevent deviance.

Each portrait is made up of three colors: a background color, a highlight color, and a shadow color. The midtone is generally left out or absorbed by either the highlight or shadow.

Something I should experiment with is textures, like brushstrokes or some more grimey stuff. This could add a lot of depth and would make it easier to fit in with different UI/world designs.

Navigation

Unclear as of yet, but there are a few possibilities:

- first-person 3D, rooms are static scenes a la obra diinn
 - Heavy on voice acting to convey emotion
 - 3D would be hard to realize for me solo
- visual noval style, still (pre-rendered) backgrounds
 - would need a lot of stills to convey a progressing scenario
- Completely textual, perhaps scenario's ending with a still
 - relatively light on visual elements, probably only having some stills and character portraits
 - text would have to be interesting, especially if there's no voice acting
- **Straight topdown a la heat signature / darkwood**
 - conveys the surveillance feeling quite well
 - flexible with its visual medium, can be 2d/3d/mixed media
 - events will be harder to visualize, due to odd perspective mostly

Dialogue System

For this project I'll be using the PixelCrushers dialogue system, but this time I plan on spending more time finding a scalable workflow. Perhaps I'll be able to take my

experience with csv/tsv files with me, which could do my workflow good. The fact that conversations generally aren't planned to branch should help as well.

Scenarios

Scenarios are events that take place around the experiences of the tenants, either within their apartments or the complex's shared spaces. These experiences aren't very much steeped in action, usually the actors remain in place, they are often the aftermath of something or a very intimate moment between people or of a single person.

PC Degradation

A core part of the experience is the deterioration of the PC's ability to experience the complex, as to convey aging.

Energy Degradation

Starting the game the player observes their tenants on a day-by-day basis. When the game progresses, the days that are observable become far and few between due to required hibernation.

Sensory Degradation

Everything starts out in full working order. Cameras and microphones are plentiful and undamaged, every apartment is within your grasp. When progressing the game this changes, things get damaged or completely wrecked, apartments become inaccessible, stored information corrupts, which is meant to draw parallels with ailments that come with aging like deafness and forgetfulness.

Tenant Storylines

The complex consists of a total of 24 units, spread out over 3 floors of 8 apartments. Every unit has its stories, related to its tenants, their guests, and other tenants that interact with them. Every apartment can be observed a total of 6 times, spread out over the 6 dates where the PC awakens from their hibernation.

Observations are allowed to be mundane, but not too often. Mostly intended as something to fill dead space and keep every unit interactible.

APT001: The Eldery Couple

- cuddling in bed, conversing intimately
 - PC learns about 'emotional love'
- couple watching TV, husband is visibly disabled and has been for a long time
 - PC learns about 'disability', equivocates it to their own state of limited ability
- bathroom, wife discovers she's terminally sick from a phone call and lies about it to her husband
 - PC learns about 'little white lies'
- Husband with a carer, he's much more soft-spoken and 'isolated'
 - PC learns about 'grief'
- Husband alone, showing signs of severe dementia
 - PC learns about 'memory loss'
- house is empty, cleaners are working to prep it for new tenants
 - PC learns about 'moving on'

APT002: The Sex Worker

sex work, boundaries, labour ethics, sexual trauma,

- A client hides the fact that he has an STD, the sex worker narrowly avoids having sex with them
 - PC learns about 'STDs'

APT003: The Addicted Couple

- The couple uses together and talk
 - PC learns about 'recreational drug use'
- The couple argues with their plug, who's concerned about their use habits
 - PC learns about 'addiction'
- One of the couple has a close call, almost choking on their own puke. PC witnesses the aftermath of this happening
 - PC learns about 'near-death experiences'
- Couple is playing a co-op game on the TV, evidently part of their rehab process
 - PC learns about 'addiction rehab'
- One of the couple had a relapse
 - PC learns about 'addiction relapse'
- The couple is sleeping in the middle of the day, with no apparent drugs or drug paraphernalia
 - PC learns about "

APT004: The Bachelor

toxic masculinity, modern dating, male sexuality, male social dynamics

APT005: The Starting Family

childhood, work-life balance, parenting, child discipline,

APT006: The Socialite

post-revolution social dynamics, (fake) friends, the youth of the nation, loneliness

APT007: The Old-World Sympathant

extremism, civilian militias, political pipelines, alienation,

APT008: The Non-Conformist

APT101: The Accelerationist

APT102: The Decelerationist

APT103: The Immigrants

APT104: The Expats

APT105: The Student

APT106: The Veteran and His Family

- confrontation with The Old-World Sympathant

APT107: The Transgender Woman

APT108: The Mother and The Sickly Child

APT201: The Grieving Parents

APT202: The Pedophile

- Dinner date with a woman he met online
 - PC learns about 'courtship'
- He's browsing child porn on his pc
 - PC learns about "

APT203: The Hobbyist

APT204: The Working-Class Family

APT205: The Open Couple

- A BDSM sequence
 - PC learns about 'consent'

APT206: The Prodigy

APT207: The Property Manager

APT208: The Nightshifter