THE WALLPAPER

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A horror-inspired game concept

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"The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

is a short story of a woman suffering from postpartum depression. The story was written in the late 1800's and since mental illnesses were not as studied as they are today, the woman's husband, who is also a doctor, prescribes her to total rest and locks her away in a room in a summer home. There she is driven slowly insane by the "hideous" wallpaper and starts to see the image of a woman trapped behind the patterning. At the end the woman tries to free the other from behind the wallpaper by tearing it off the walls. There are many small details that are easily dismissed at first because the story is written from the woman's perspective; We don't know what is real or not, and if some of the details of the room are indeed real she is being kept in a rather inhumane situation.

These feelings of claustrophobia, anxiety, and seeing things from an unreliable point of view can be an interesting way to build upon this story to make a horror game that focuses more on the stress of the situation rather than cheap jumpscares and sudden noises.

Keeping in theme to the time of the late 1800's and also a figure trapped in the walls of the house lends itself well to the rather common type of horror game where the player has to escape from a haunted place.

Horror as a genre can be used to explore in a safe way the things in life that we are afraid of. It can also be used to address societal inequalities or issues we see today by way of metaphors, monsters, and motifs. This game concept could help the players and even the creators to explore themes of stress, anxiety, and loss of trust and independence in and from those closest to you.

By using a more cutesy visual style, it opens up this genre to others who may not otherwise take part in Horror through games or films. The contrast between the more friendly looking visuals and the potential weight of the story can help give distance for the player so as not to feel like they themselves are trapped, but still feel empathy to the character they play by seeing the story unfold from their perspective.

The Game

The Wallpaper is a 2D and 3D point-and-click style adventure horror game. You play as two different characters, each with different abilities but with the same goal: to escape from the house you are trapped in. The player will explore the house using these two characters to find items and clues to escape from the house and uncover why they are both trapped.

The game has two different endings: the player can either escape the house with only the main character or with both playable characters. Certain plot points and items must be found in order for both characters to escape, but they are not necessary for the main character to get out. This helps create both replay value and a deeper story that involves both playable characters.

The game starts in media res with the main character, a weasel, waking up to discover they are locked in a room.

While playing the weasel, the house is viewed from a 2D perspective, and only one wall can be seen at a time in whatever room you are in. There is a swiping transition when moving from one wall to the next, and when in range of interactable points a marker will pop up to notify the player. Playing as the weasel will allow you to interact with and collect objects and clues.

The player will have to manage Weasel's sanity which can be determined by the amount/severity of "hallucinations" or incongruencies in the environment: moving or changing in wall patterning or textures, sounds, dark fog, etc. Sanity goes down the less you play as Weasel and the more time they spend outside their room, but can be recovered by being in the room.

As the game progresses Weasel meets the shadow, who is trapped in the walls of the house. The Shadow also wants to escape, and the two decide to work together since they have the same end goal. When playing as the shadow the player can move freely through the house but only along the walls in a 3D perspective.

The player can rotate the house as they move through it to see where they are going. Places that are unexplored by either character are obscured by fog. The shadow can not interact with things physically, but they can scout out areas, spy on the other characters in the house, and bring back information to Weasel. The shadow cannot be seen by anyone other than Weasel, but other characters can sense their presence and will stop what they were doing or behave differently the longer the shadow is near them. This can be both a hinderance and be used to the player's benefit. Too much time spend playing as the Shadow will lower Weasel's sanity.

While exploring the house the player can switch back and forth between Weasel and the shadow, to scout ahead and then collect objects or clues. The player must be careful to sneak through the house undetected, otherwise Badger, Weasel's partner and doctor, will catch Weasel and lock them back up in the room, and possibly even take away tools and items the player has collected. Weasel can get caught while the player is playing as the shadow, so they need to be on alert and make sure not to leave Weasel for too long.

Storyboards

For an example of gameplay, the first storyboard shows a conditional scene where, after having found a way to unlock the door to their room and acquiring a journal to take notes in, if Weasel is caught with the journal by Badger, it gets confiscated and Weasel and the shadow must work together to get it back. Without the journal Weasel cannot collect environmental clues. This scene shows how the player would navigate as both playable characters, a mini-game, as well as if they fail or succeed in retrieving the journal.

The second storyboard shows a suggestion for the begining of the game to introduce how intractive spots and dialog works and to introduce the playable characters. The intro storyboard was then animated to show what the game could look and sound like.

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No. Journal Retrieval 1 — Actions/events — Dialog/text

S/C	Screen / Picture 画面／絵	内容・動き・演出	効果音・セリフ	時間
S. C.		This event/puzzle can only happen after player has opened the door to their room + found a journal to write in.	A "co-op" between the two playable characters, to scout + stealth and get the book	+
S. C.		Weasel (player) using notebook (like inventory) footsteps approaching from off-screen, door opening sound		+
S. C.		Badger comes in, player has not put book away in time	badger is angry and says you aren't supposed to be writing	+
S. C.		Badger takes book (unavoidable, like a cutscene) and leaves room, locks door, distancing footsteps		+
S. C.		Player walks to door wall, interacts w/ door	option to switch to shadow comes up, player clicks yes	+
S. C.		Shadow appears from behind Weasel, it is now playable. Weasel's head follows shadow's movements when visible		+

合計時間 (+)

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No. Journal Retrieval 2

S/C	画面／絵 (Screen/Picture)	内容・動き・演出 (Actions/events)	効果音・セリフ (dialog/text)	時間
S. / C.		Shadow slips through door, transition screen — pinhole on shadow + door		+
S. / C.		3D isometric view of house, fog goes away as areas are explored. Walls in front of camera are lowered		+
S. / C.		player can rotate view of house as they explore	Short cutscene to transition to downstairs	+
S. / C.		Shadow goes downstairs along wall, goes into a new room (change angles)		+
S. / C.		Shadow investigates living room, finds location of book		+
S. / C.		report back to Weasel		+

合計時間 (+)

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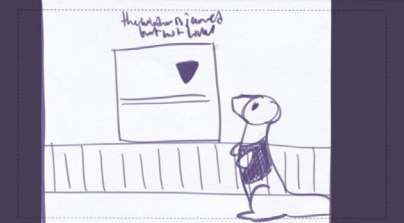| S/C	画面／絵 (Screen/Picture)	内容・動き・演出 (Action/Events)	効果音・セリフ (text/dialog)	時間
S. / C.		Weasel picks door open (mini game?)	mini game if you have tool instead of a key → Sound based, 3 clicks to unlock	+
S. / C.		Weasel sneaks down to living room, must use sounds + shadow scouting to get there safely	*can switch between shadow + weasel while in house, but weasel can get caught	+
S. / C.		if caught = start over in room (back to before door is unlocked)		+
S. / C.		if success = get notebook back + gain info on house layout/other useful info	"There's my journal! now we just need to make it back to the room!"	+
S. / C.				
S. / C.				
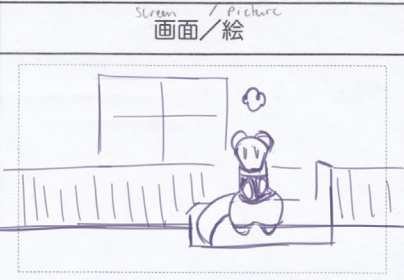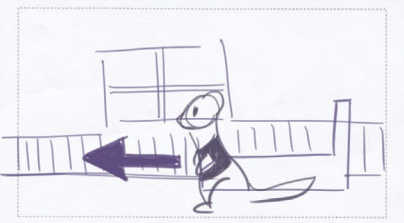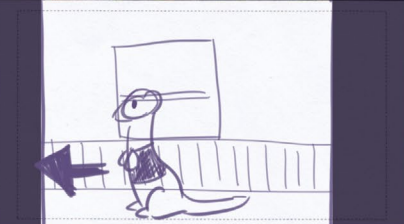
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content · movement · production   sound effect · words   time
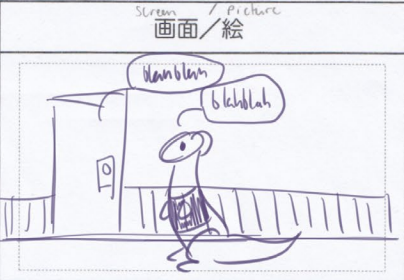
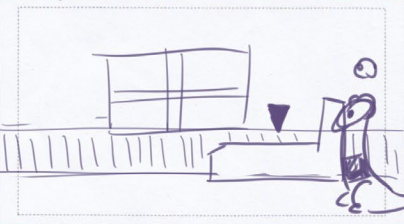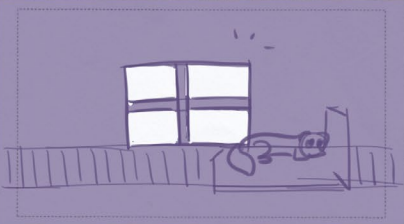| S/C	画面／絵 Screen / Picture	内容・動き・演出	効果音・セリフ	時間
S. ---- C.		character wakes up on bed after a button press ↓ press down to hop off bed	thought/text: I must have drifted off... where am I again?	+
S. ---- C.		exploration time character walks on flat plane. R or L to walk to next section of room		+
S. ---- C.		an interaction symbol pops up when in range. - investigate window ← wall is shorter + takes up less screen	text: The window isn't locked, but → it seems rather stuck. I might be able to open it eventually.	+
S. ---- C.		further exploration to next screen/wall		+
S. ---- C.		door interaction option 1: knock on door option 2: leave it be	text: the door is locked from the other side. option 1: you knock + say "hello??" - hear footsteps	+
S. ---- C.		conversation w/ badger through door. He explains why you're there if you ask "Did you need something my dear?"	option 1: "why is door locked?" option 2: "what is this room?" option 3: "will you let me out?"	+

合計時間 (+)

content · movement · production   sound effect · words   time

| S/C	画面／絵 Screen / Picture	内容・動き・演出	効果音・セリフ	時間
S. ---- C.		conversation continues until there are no more options or player leaves.		+
S. ---- C.		conversation ends exploration continues character goes L to last wall	thought/text: I need to find a way out...	+
S. ---- C.		interactions = wall and small door character continues L to complete the round of the room	wall = comment about dislike of wallpaper door = needs a small key to open	+
S. ---- C.		interaction = sleep on bed? y/n character sleeps	thought/text: well I have nothing else to do right now...	+
S. ---- C.		room shifts to blue, and a shadow appears, reaching out to character	(cut scene, no interaction available) ↓	+
S. ---- C.		character wakes up, shadow disappears, character shivers		+

CUT TO BLACK - TITLE SCREEN

合計時間 (+)
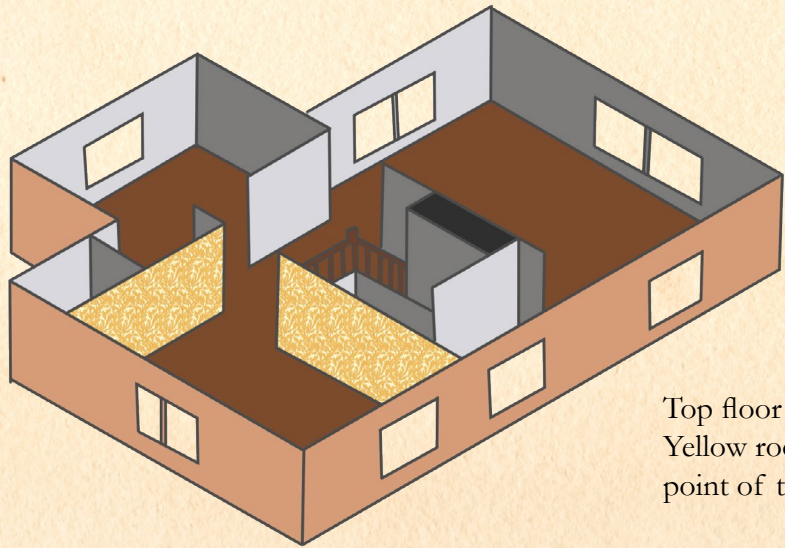
Top floor layout
Yellow room is starting
point of the game

Potential style of living room while playing as the shadow and Weasel
respectively.
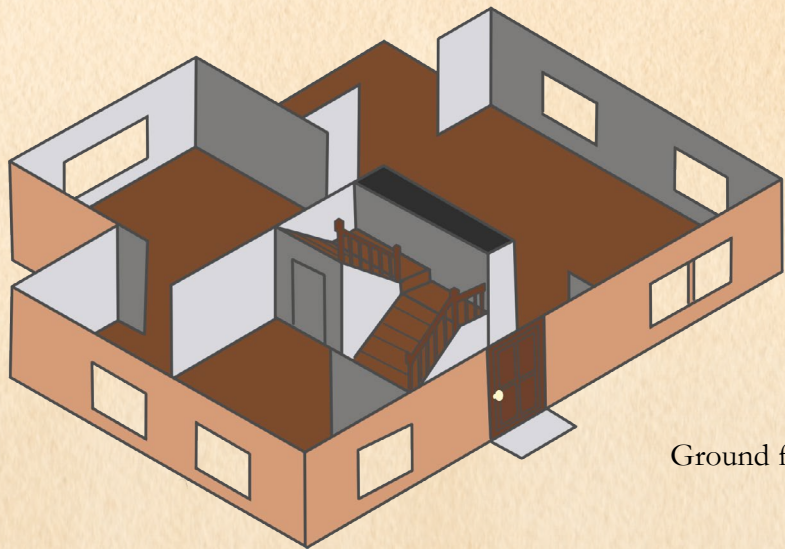
Ground floor layout

To watch the animated suggested gameplay please go to:
https://youtu.be/H_lT2PEbKEE