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Los Malditos Postmortem

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* What went right (3-5 different items with complete explanation on the impact they had on the project).
  + My original goal was to make a fun, mainstream quality capture the flag level. Based on play tests conducted by peers and non-developer game players I believe I accomplished my goal with this project. While it is technically a vertical slice, the level is completely functional, the set design is well done and complete, and I was able to implement the death pit system which adds a unique modifier and interest to the level. Furthermore, I am extremely happy with my ability to deconstruct the basic layout of the sampled map, *Adrift*, and reconstruct it in a unique way that sets *Los Malditos* apart. Lastly, I kept to my milestone schedule and ended up completing "one of the best levels created by a student at UAT".
* What went wrong (3-5 different items with complete explanation on the impact they had on the project).
  + The biggest challenge I faced on this project was re-doing mirrored worked to make sure everything was symmetrical. When I began the project I created the exterior wall geometry of the entire level which later led to issues trying to maintain symmetry. To overcome this issue I decided to fully fill out one half of the map, including all set design, texturing, and scripting functionality. However, as the map began to become more complex and due to the copy and paste of assets to create perfect symmetry, UDK began slowing down and caused multiple cases of copies to be created on top of their original assets; slowing down UDK even further (there are no performance issues in-game with the map). Due to this, the finished map lags too much when changes are made to effectively make any further changes. In the grand scheme of things, this does not make a difference; however, I did want to go back and improve the geometry of some of the walls to make them more interesting throughout the level so it does not look as empty for long stretches.
* Lessons learned (3-5 different items with complete explanation on the impact they had on the project).
  + In regards to actual design, I learned a great deal from emulating professional level designers and reformulated/combining several different existed formats to create a fresh experience for players. Also, I explored several other avenues and created ideas for how to improve this map, or future maps based on the work I completed for Los Malditos. Examples included using bsp to create interesting environments instead of solely relying on static meshes and textures, using the Matinee tool to add effects and obstacles into maps, and using feedback to effectively change the design of a map. My final level turned out slightly different than my originally planned map because the center room was originally too large and empty so I used extra bsp and static meshes to create a condensing effect which added interest along with staircases and catwalks in the center room for more movement and action. My professor also suggested taking out the floor of the middle room and just having a bunch of floating, movable, catwalks so if a player gets knocked off they plummet to their death. I think the idea is really interesting and would like to use it in a future map. However, at the time I was given the suggestion it was too late to change my map to see if it would be better or not and the suggestion does not fit with the back-story/theme of the level. I also learned the importance of adopting early modular set building when making symmetrical maps. While issues did arise, I was able to see it quickly enough that it didn't impede the overall workflow and in the future I will definitely start with a modular approach. Lastly, the issues with the engine slowing down led me to learned about level streaming which I will be using in future single player levels but the implications of streaming a level in and out doesn't seem like it would function well in a multiplayer setting.
* What still needs to be done (a listing of tasks you would still like to complete on this level)
  + As I mentioned in the lessons learned section I would like to explore the idea of having an area of a level floorless and allowing players to drop to their deaths if they make a traversal mistake. I also did more Matinee work in this level than I have during any other UDK work and I would like to explore it further since it adds so much to the overall polish of a level. If I could go back and change anything to Los Malditos it would be to add some more varying geometry, light sources, and maybe static meshes to the larger walls to break up the larger rooms of the level.