How the Promotional Art for Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 Communicates Gameplay

An analysis of how the art style in promotional art for Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 communicates the respective gameplay to the target audience

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Abstract

The thesis presents an analytic work of the MDA-framework and the promotional art of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 and how the two areas correlate with each other. The aim for the thesis is to investigate how the art style of the promotional art uses the elements of art to communicate the different gameplay of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2, both set in a science fiction world, to their respective audiences in order to find how the elements of art can help to emphasize communication of gameplay information to the audience. This is reached by analyzing the gameplay of both games with the help of the MDA-framework by Hunicke, LeBlanc and Zubek enabling the analyses to reach a more comprehensive breakdown of the games. The analyses of the promotional artwork for both games are weighed against categories in the elements of art, the reason to find a more comprehensive breakdown of the promotional art. The data from both analyses are later compared with each other to find how the elements of art communicate information of the gameplay to the audience. In addition, it presents what categories of the elements of art in this analysis seems to be the most common for communicating gameplay information of the chosen promotional artworks. The conclusion is that the use of elements of art in promotional art in Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 seems to carry more information that communicates to the audience than what might be the first to meet the eye. This leads to an understanding that the analysis of a broader sample size of promotional art from the games can open an opportunity of a better understanding how the use of elements of art in promotional art can communicate gameplay to the audience. Additionally this could also be applied to a larger range of games in order to find how different genres use the elements of art to communicate to their respective audience.

Keywords: elements of art, MDA-framework, visual communication, gestalt
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1 Introduction

This thesis is about investigating what components in promotional art communicate with the target audience for Mass Effect 2 (Electronic Arts, 2010) and Halo 4 (Microsoft Studios, 2012). Mass Effect 2 is a computer role playing game with action-shooter elements set in the future with strong science fiction theme. The artwork for the game often depicts scenes of inhabited highly technological cities with crowds of people showing a living world, often in combination with details containing strong and bright colors, which often relies upon clear geometrical and repeating shapes. Other artwork also shows intense combat scenes where the main characters fight for their survival with different tactics. Halo 4 is a first person shooter with a strong action aspect and strong science fiction influences, as Mass Effect 2. The artwork for Halo 4 does also depict scenes with details with strong and bright colors, which often relies upon clear geometrical and repeating shapes. Differing from Mass Effect 2 the environments of Halo 4 does not often contain more than one character, other than combat scenes where the main character often is portrayed as a person who can defeat anything a by himself.

Artwork for games has mostly been used as a work method to design characters and environments; it has however become more popular to be used as promotional art for game titles over the years. A similar scenario can be found in newspapers where the distribution of information was most important aspect. It later used Gestalt principles for its layout to lead the reader through the pages of the newspapers, an example would be how newspapers used to be filled with only lengthy blocks of texts and through the years be more aesthetically designed to be easier to read and give the reader an appeal to read and buy the paper (Lester, 2006). This can also be similarly found in how marketing uses colors and shapes to affect the customer, where different colors create different emotional states in the customer which means that colors can be used to reach different target audiences (Boone & Kurtz, 2012; Smith and Taylor, 2004). Colors and shapes are two components of the elements of art (Sandberg, 2009; Fussell, 2014; Crane, 1914; Paul Getty Museum, 2014; Center of Visual Literacy, 2014) and this is a part of what this thesis will cover, how Mass Effect 2 and Halo 4 uses these different elements in the art style for the promotional art to reach their respective target audience. The thesis will also analyze the different kinds of gameplay each game contains, these will be examples of major activities the player will be exposed to during the gameplay.

The components of the promotional art for this analysis are based upon the elements of art (Sandberg 2009; Fussell, 2014; Crane, 1914; Paul Getty Museum, 2014; Center of Visual Literacy, 2014) which are basic components in art itself. These components are used to produce a certain art style for a project in sense of aesthetic appearances and can in extension be used to impose an emotional response in a target audience by different colors and shapes, among others (Lester, 2006) (Smith, Taylor 2004). Both games are analyzed to define different gameplay elements which the games rely upon to define their own genre (Adams, 2010; Hunicke, LeBlanc, Zubek, 2014). By using the elements of art to analyze what gameplay elements the promotional art emphasizes, this thesis aims to investigate what the developers of these games try to communicate to the target audience.
1.1 Aim and Questions

This paper aims to analyze how the art style of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 use the elements of art in their respective promotional art in order to communicate the gameplay of each game to their target audience. The paper also investigates what aspects of the gameplay are communicated in the promotional art of the games in order to investigate what aspects of the games are important for the developers to convey to the target audience.

Main question:

How does the art style of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 use the elements of art to communicate the MDA-framework through the promotional artwork to the target audience?

In order to find supportive data for this question, the background covers a definition of the theoretical framework of the elements of art. Similarly a definition of the MDA-framework and what it means is also covered. This is followed by an analysis of the MDA-framework for Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 according to the definitions of Hunicke, et al, as well as an analysis of the promotional art of both games following the definitions of the elements of art in this thesis. Followed by a comparative discussion of both the artistic analyses and MDA analyses to investigate how both games communicate with the target audience, and how the elements of art are used to communicate different gameplay information within the same artistic genre (science fiction).

1.2 Literature Review

The literature review and background introduces different terminologies and theories used in the thesis as well as defining the elements of art and how it is used in this thesis in order to investigate how the elements of art is used in the game and the theory behind the gameplay analysis.

1.2.1 Elements of Art

The elements of art (Sandberg, 2009; Fussell, 2014; Crane, 1914; Paul Getty Museum, 2014; Center of Visual Literacy 2014) are a variety of basic components which artwork contain, these are the components which are the easiest to discern from one another by their simplistic appearance. They are often placed into different categories: lines, shapes and forms, space, colors, and textures.

Lines are what defines a shape and describes what the particular shape represents, whether it is a soft and liquid like substance, or hard and sharp solid. This is something that can be easily seen in 2D animations where the line work often shows (Sandberg, 2009; Stanchfield, 2009). Lines can also be according to Block (2008) the meeting of two edges in a three-dimensional space and the contour of an object. Both Block and Crane also argue that lines can also be used in order to describe movement to lead the audience attention. Block describes this through an example of how a photograph of a highway leads the audience to follow the direction of the cars or the movement of a character crossing the streets leads the audience to the other side of the street to the persons intended destination (Block 2008, p.105). This also shared by Cranes example of how movement creates lines which the audience will follow (Crane, 1914 p.16).
As the figure shows the use of lines can describe a variety of properties. Starting with Milt Kahls (Stanchfield, 2009) example of Edgar from Aristocats to the left (Figure 01). The use of lines depicts exaggerated emotions, creases and folds of the facial features as well as the behavior of the clothes. The second picture shows the work of Iain McCaig to the right (Figure 02). The use of lines in McCaigs drawing shows a description of how the hair flows and the creases of the skin in the old man’s face, a more realistic depiction compared to Kahls.

Shapes and forms are easily identifiable geometrical components of often more complex objects. These can in a two-dimensional aspect be broken down into: square, circle, equilateral triangle and ellipse, among others. In a three-dimensional aspect the components would translate to: cube, sphere, three-sided pyramid, and ellipsoid, among others (Block, 2008; Sandberg, 2009; Stanchfield, 2009). Walter Crane’s drawings (Figure 03) exemplify how shapes and forms can be found more or less everywhere by comparing his two pictures with each other (Figure 03 and Figure 04).
Space defines three constraints of a composition; width, height and depth, creating the illusion of a three-dimensional space within a two-dimensional surface (Block, 2008; Sandberg, 2009). Dick Termes’ pictures (Figure 05, Figure 06, Figure 07) can be used to show the difference uses of space can have in an environment by adding vanishing points.

Colors can be used to describe materials, time of day, moods and emotions (Sandberg, 2009; Gurney, 2010; Michlap, 2013). It can also be used to convey an emotion to the audience, or attract interest from a particular audience depending on the use of color (Boone and Kurtz, 2012; Lester, 2006; Smith and Taylor, 2004).

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By using two of Claude Monet’s paintings of the Rouen Cathedral series (Figure 09 and Figure 10), it is clear how colors can be used to depict different times of the day even if the same subject matter is being used.

![Monet paintings](image)

Textures define what kind of material an object is, being either metallic, fabric, liquid or rock. This helps the readability of different surfaces within a composition (Sandberg, 2009; Gurney, 2010; Crane, 1914). By using two paintings by Rembrandt it is easy to show how texture in both paintings describe different materials: the painting to the left (Figure 11) shows how the use of highlights can be used to describe metal, while the use of more matte colors can be used to describe cloth, as seen in the painting to the right (Figure 12).

1.2.2 Gameplay and the MDA Framework

The MDA-framework stands for mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics. This is a methodology to understand how games work and to create a bridge between game design and development, but also game designer and audience, among others. The figure below (Figure 13) describes how the designer reaches the audience through mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics, while the player experiences the mechanics and dynamics from first being introduced to the aesthetics of the game.

![MDA framework](image)

Figure 13: Perspective of the MDA-framework from the perspective of designer and player, Hunicke et al, 2014.
Mechanics are the most basic components within the game which are the rules the game plays by, an example would be the use of shuffling, folding and calling in a game of Poker or the different rules of movement the pieces of Chess have. Dynamics are an extension of what mechanics can create, in both Chess and Poker the different mechanics can create a bluffing dynamic. By using both the examples of Poker and Chess which both allow the players to bluff, this can create the aesthetic *challenge*. Aesthetic is in this case (game design) what kind of experience or fun the player should experience. Aesthetic can be broken down into eight different kinds of fun; Fantasy, Narrative, Challenge, Sensation, Expression, Fellowship, Submission, and Discovery (Hunicke et al, 2014).

MDA is a formal approach to understanding games - one which attempts to bridge the gap between game design and development, game criticism, and technical game research. We believe this methodology will clarify and strengthen the iterative processes of developers, scholars and researchers alike, making it easier for all parties to decompose, study and design a broad class of game designs and game artifacts. (Hunicke et a, 2014, p. 1)

Gameplay are the challenges the player is presented with during the game and the actions the player is allowed to use during the game in order to overcome these challenges. This is something Adams (2010) refers to in *Fundamentals of Game Design*.

The correct answer to the question, “Wouldn’t it be fun to play a game set in ancient Rome?” is another question: “Yes, it would. What kinds of things could a player do in ancient Rome?” The more precise you are, the better. (Adams, 2010, p. 69).

Which not only correlates to how the aesthetics of the MDA-framework is an important part of the gameplay experience, but also the importance of what the player actually will be doing in the game, and give the player an understanding of what these things are, meaning that the dynamics and mechanics are at least equally important.
2 Method

The specific gameplay for Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 is extrapolated by analysing the gameplay of each game and with the help of using the Halo 4 Guide (Microsoft, 2012) and Mass Effect 2 Game Manual (Electronic Arts, 2010) through the MDA-framework (Hunicke, et al, 2014). The MDA analyses highlights which gameplay components are important for each game. This is done by finding the key components in the following:

- Mechanics: The most basic tasks the player can perform during the game which the rules of the games allow. This often includes simple tasks such as walking, jumping, collecting items, taking damage etc. This is done by analysing the rules of the game, analysing its gameplay and the manuals for each game.
- Dynamics: This is found by analysing the gameplay of each game and how the mechanics for each game interacts with the gameplay. By having the dynamics through the mechanics, this allows the definition of the aesthetics.
- Aesthetics: Hunicke argues that aesthetics can be broken down into at least eight different kinds of fun: Sensation, Fantasy, Narrative, Challenge, Fellowship, Discovery, Expression and Submission (Hunicke et al, 2014, p2). By using the dynamics and mechanics in the game, this allows the ability to point to the different kinds of fun are presented in the game.

In order to find usable data on how promotional art for Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 use different elements of arts to communicate gameplay with their respective audiences, this thesis analyses three different promotional artworks for each game. These artworks are weighed against the elements of art (Sandberg, 2009; Fussell, 2014; Crane, 1914; Paul Getty Museum, 2014; Center of Visual Literacy, 2014) on how they portray specific gameplay to their respective audience. The elements of arts is based upon the following:

- Lines: This data is found by two variations: the first by analysing where the artist wants the audience attention to be, this is done by finding character movement within the artwork (a person walking, running or jumping) or indicating an object of interest (a person pointing at something). These movements and directions are presented by lines. The second is to analyse how line work are used in details to convey specific texture information, this will however be presented in ‘Textures’.
- Shapes and Forms: Using basic geometrical shapes and forms as a reference for different important subjects (different characters being enemies or friendly, weapons, vehicles or environment) in the artwork gives data on how to discern these from each other.
- Space: By comparing size differences in similar sized characters in the scene indicates a depth within the artwork. The size differences are presented by using lines to show the gradual change in size in the different objects. Space is also by determined if there are any form of atmospheric effects which indicate depth within the scene, by comparing two different areas within the scene that have atmospherics effects.
- Color: With the help of Photoshop, the most commonly used colors within the artwork is determined, and documented with the color wheel in accordance with the additive RGB color model.
- Texture: By comparing different sample areas of the artwork with each other, this
allows to show how different textures are being used on different objects to specify what information is being communicated for that object. This can range from the texture used for a specific material, being, the environment, or an effect which is relevant for the game.

2.1 Material

Halo 4 (Microsoft Studios, 2012) is a science fiction first person shooter action game released on XBOX 360, it has sold a total of 9.01 million copies from its release in November 6th 2012 to April 26th 2014 (Vgchartz, 2014a)

Mass Effect 2 (EA Entertainment, 2010) is science fiction action role playing game released on XBOX 360, Microsoft Windows and Playstation 3, it has sold a total of 4.72 million copies from its release in January 2010 to April 26th 2014 (Vgchartz, 2014b; Vgchartz, 2014c; Vgchartz, 2014d)

The promotional art for each game for the analyses has been officially released by the developers as a part of their marketing campaign for the games. This thesis will rely upon promotional art which depict a similar scenario as each other in order to focus the analyses on similarities and differences within the same circumstances in the artwork.

Figure 14: Halo 4 Chief vs Forerunner Combat, Microsoft Studios, 2012.
Figure 15: Halo 4 Chief and Warthog Promo Art, Microsoft Studios, 2012.

Figure 16: Chief vs Knight, Microsoft Studios, 2012.
Figure 17: Promotional Art 1 Mass Effect 2, Electronic Arts, 2010.

Figure 18: Promotional Art 2 Mass Effect 2, Electronic Arts, 2010.

Figure 19: Promotional Art 3 Mass Effect 2, Electronic Arts, 2010.
2.2 Limitations

The promotional art analyses are limited to promotional art that are released by the developer. This means that artwork for solely environment design, character design, box art and similar will not be included.

The MDA-framework analyses are limited to the original games. This means that possible expansions for the games are not included, additionally possible downloadable content for each game will be excluded as well.

3 Results

This section presents the MDA-analysis and Elements of art-analysis of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2, the first presents the MDA-analysis of the gameplay information of both games and the second presents the Elements of art-analysis for the promotional art for both games.

3.1 MDA Analysis

This section lists the results from the MDA-analysis of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 according the model by Hunicke et al. The first list contains the analysis of Halo 4 and is followed by Mass Effect 2.

3.1.1 Halo 4 MDA Analysis

Mechanics
Halo 4 uses a variety of common First person shooter mechanics such as: a simple navigation system including sprinting, running, jumping and walking; the ability to use and switch and reload the weapons, also aiming more precisely with them; the game also uses a basic health system in two stages, shield and health. In addition, the player can also use different kinds vehicles both land and air vehicles, which also have their own weapon system that the player can use.

A few more specific mechanics for Halo 4 are the different abilities which can be used during the game, these can give the player different special abilities including; shield, jetpack, heat vision among others. Additionally the game uses a reward system for the player which includes better weapons the further into the game the player can get. This is due to the variation of enemies which get harder throughout the game. It also uses the narrative as a reward system for the player, if the player can get from point A to point B, the player will get more of the story, either by a cinematic cut scene or in game dialogues.

Dynamics
The most basic dynamic of Halo 4 is the first person shooter setup, in the sense of using different kinds of weapons and navigating freely through the levels. This allows the player to get into the role as Master Chief and get through different kinds of levels. During these levels the player will encounter a variety of enemies which the player often has to defeat to be able to proceed (the character might get killed otherwise).
The enemies serve as a challenging element for the player; they have different kind of tactics to attack. This can vary from being on foot to being in a vehicle making it harder for the player. Halo 4 only allows the player to carry two weapons at a time, which creates a tactical element for the player depending on how the player wants to defeat the enemies. In addition, the player can also acquire special items that can give the player some sort of perk, which can range from heat vision, to shields or a jetpack. Furthermore Halo 4 uses a regenerative health system which exists in two stages: shield and health; the shield is the first stage to be depleted when fired upon, and after that the health. This is something that creates a well-functioning tension element for the player. The games story about saving Cortana and returning to Earth creates a motivation for the player to continue, partly due to the plot devices within the game and the players’ engagement to be further challenged and able to uncover more of the plot.

**Aesthetics**

Narrative: Halo 4 is a very narrative based game, this serves as a reward system for the player as well. It is both told by cinematic cut scenes where the player will get a more in-depth story to the whole game, however the game is also told by in game dialogue which the player will listen to during the gameplay. This serves as a tool to give the player a bond with different characters in the game, such as the bond with Cortana, whom Master Chief meets early in the game and also plays as a vital plot. The player will also get to know the world better throughout the game and why Master Chief is there. The player gets different kinds of tasks to perform through the story in the sense of mission by getting from point A to point B. Finishing these tasks will allow the player to get further into the story.

Challenge: The player will be exposed to different kinds of challenging elements in the game, the biggest part are the different kinds of enemies which the player has to deal with in the different levels by using a variety of weapons and abilities to find a tactic which is suitable for the player. The game also has different challenging factors within the missions that the player has to accomplish to be able to progress, either by time restraint or by waves of enemies.

Submission: Halo 4 uses submission in combination with the challenge aesthetic. It is a vital part of the game to be able to do the same thing over and over to be able to progress. In the sense of first person shooter, this relates to defeating waves of enemies again and again in different situations and be rewarded by potential weapon drops which the player can use.

Fantasy: As most first person shooters, Halo 4 has a small fantasy element where the player takes the role as protagonist; in this case Master Chief. The player learns early on who Master Chief is and is able to get into that role fairly easy. The game’s fantasy elements play closely to the narrative aesthetic and the potential bond the player gets to the characters in the game.

### 3.1.2 Mass Effect 2 MDA Analysis

**Mechanics**

Playing as a special agent in Mass Effect 2 gives the player a variety of mechanics. Some of these are similar to the d20 system, where some of the abilities the player can perform in game are based on statistical data which represents how good the player’s character is on certain abilities and including a small chance of failure meaning that the better the player’s character is on something the chance of failure is lower.
This can be seen in the abilities such as bypassing doors, hacking terminals and the like. The game uses small quick events during conversations in the game where the player can choose to either be good (charm) or evil (intimidate) against the other party, creating a system on how the players wants to play. Mass Effect 2 also relies on different shooter genre premises, such as the ability to dive behind cover, and shoot over the ledge. Being a real time role playing game allows the action element in the game to grow, this includes commanding the companions on tactical decisions, being able to suppress enemies or use biotic skills to suspend them in the air.

**Dynamics**
The combination of shooter elements, role playing game character creation and leveling creates an immersion for the player. This makes the player want to be good at the parts of the character the player likes, and more prone to use these mechanics. Combat using different kinds of tactics makes it easier for the player to relate to the character’s basic profession (Spectre) in addition to the specialization. Being able to take cover and command the different companions in the current group enhances the feeling of being a professional agent and allows the player to feel competent for the task. The real time aspect of the game allows the player to feel to be in the moment of the game and creates an element of tension. The ability to pause the combat mode of the game allows the player to tactically assess the situation and analyze what would be the best solution. Being able to be good or evil in the game creates another level of immersion for the player, this makes the player more aware of the choices that are being made and knowing that they may have an effect on the player’s surroundings.

**Aesthetics**
Narrative: Mass Effect 2 starts with Commander Shepard waking up at the Lazarus Project after being reconstructed by the Cerberus group. A certain Illusive Man tells the reason for Shepard’s resurrection is due to a new threat that has attacked different human colonies. The player will later investigate a recently attacked colony which confirms the threat, afterwards the player has to recruit a competent team which the Illusive Man has given the player information about.

Fantasy: Playing as a Spectre, an agent with extraordinary authority in the galaxy of Mass Effect 2, gives the player the ability to choose how to play the game in some extent, either by playing as a good and lawful agent, or an evil and vengeful one.

This will open different opportunities for the player to play Shepard as the player wants and be able to immerse deeper into the game. The ability to play different ways also gives the player different reactions from the companion the player travels with and will gain trusts from others and lose trust of some. Being able to create the character in the beginning of the game also creates a fantasy element for the player, where the player has the chance to choose what kind of Spectre the player is going to be, be it an soldier with the focus on guns or an user of biotics.

Submission: Having the action shooter aspect of the game creates a submissive gameplay in Mass Effect 2, partly due to the nature of shooter games where the player again and again has to defeat a variety of enemies during the game, but also due to the fact that it gains the player experience points which are the player’s main resource for leveling up the character and to get stronger. The player will also encounter similar situations when it comes to investigating problems inside plots and the main story. Choosing to scan planets to acquire different minerals to upgrade items also enhances the submissive play.
Challenge: The player will face different kinds of challenges in the game, such as different missions, which will require the player to fulfill different requests by other characters involving investigation and detective works. The player may choose to solve these things by hacking into systems, bypassing doors, as well as charming and intimidating characters to gain information.

Expression: Mass Effect 2 gives the player the chance to choose how to play Shepard, either by being a lawful and good Spectre, or a selfish and evil one. This will give the player different kinds of paths to take in the game and will affect the relationship with the companions the player travels with. Another aspect of expression are the choices of what kind of abilities to level up in during the gameplay, this can range from being good with a sniper to focusing on being a user of biotics.

Discovery: The ability to uncover information is a large part of the game considering that one of the player’s main tasks in the game is to investigate different situations in the world; this can vary from disputes between characters in the game, to find murder victims or thieves, among others. The ability to explore space is another big aspect in the game, this gives the player a chance to scan planets in the system which can result in acquiring materials to craft from, or new assignments depending on what anomalies are found on the planet. These assignments work as a backstory filler and give the player a chance to further relationships with different companions, allowing the player to get to know them better and gain perks through it.

3.2 Promotional Art Analysis

This section presents the analysis of the promotional art chosen for this thesis according to the principles of the elements of art (Sandberg 2009; Fussell, 2014; Crane, 1914; Paul Getty Museum, 2014; Center of Visual Literacy, 2014). The first analysis to be presented is Halo 4 which is later followed by Mass Effect 2.

3.2.1 Halo 4 Promotional Art Analysis

The following sections present the elements of art analysis of the promotional art of Halo 4, each topic is followed by an image in order to explain the analysis.
Analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Forerunner Combat

Line

Figure 20: Line analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Forerunner Combat, edited by Author. 2014.

The lines show a strong direction of the character’s movement towards the audience; this sets the focus on the character in the center. The direction of the character’s aiming weapon leads the viewer to the first creature on the right in the foreground, later to the second enemy to the left in the foreground and finally to the third creature with the sparking eye, returning to the character and following what is behind the character, later to return the cycle.

Color

Figure 21: Color analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Forerunner Combat by Author. 2014.
The figure shows a complementary color scheme using a majority of blue and orange complimentary colors, making it easy for the audience to distinguish the areas from each other. The picture also uses a green-cyan color for the character in the center, this also to make it easier to distinguish it from the rest of the environment.

Shape

![Shape analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Forerunner Combat, edited by Author. 2014.](image)

The areas marked in red show a use of sharp triangular shapes, a use of sharp edges and soft curvature for the surface. This creates an easily identifiable aspect of the creature. This clearly differs from the green marked area of the character, which uses a repetition of different square shapes with soft or beveled edge, making the character easy to distinguish from the rest of the creatures in the scene.

Space

By comparing the size of the head of two similar creatures in this scene it is easy to see how the distance depicts the depth of the space in the scene. The space is also depicted by the use of orange color upon a blue surface in the two marked red areas, both being affected by the atmospheric effect differently due to distance in the scene. This gives an additional indication on how big the area of the scene is.
Figure 23: Space analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Forerunner Combat, edited by Author. 2014.

Texture

Figure 24: Texture analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Forerunner Combat, edited by Author. 2014.
The first texture shows a use of hard and symmetrical lines creating a segmented helmet for the character; it also shows a soft gradient of values showing the materials properties of being reflective. This use of hard and symmetrical lines is also shown in the visor of the helmet, showing that this might be more than just a visor. The second texture shows variety of highly visible irregular lines on the surface of the creature’s head, this resembles something that cracks. To enhance the use of bright, a thicker and short line is present to give the sense of sparks that may emit from the creature’s head. The bottom picture shows a similar use of a highly visible irregular line as the middle picture, showing how the integrity of the material has failed. This is also enhanced by the use of a slight color and value change in the surrounding area, giving the surface of the material a sense of being burned.

Analysis of Halo 4 Chief and Warthog Promo Art

Line

The lines shows the main direction of movement in the figure, the first to be introduced is the flare of the character’s gun, later to be reverted back to the character sliding on the hood of the vehicle. The line then follows the side of the car along the spotlight on the roof, and later to return to the trails from the bullets.

Figure 25: Line analysis of Halo 4 Chief and Warthog Promo Art, edited by Author. 2014.
Color

Figure 26: Color analysis of Halo 4 Chief and Warthog Promo Art by Author. 2014.

The figure shows the use of a complementary color scheme using a majority of a deep blue color in the picture, giving the context of being late in the night, contrasting with the lighter blues and the strong orange flare which makes a focus point in the picture. Additionally a dark green-cyan gives a slight color to the character and the vehicle, making them easy to distinguish from the rest of the picture and showing the common elements of both character and vehicle.

Shape

Figure 27: Shape analysis of Halo 4 Chief and Warthog Promo Art, edited by Author. 2014.
Both the vehicle and the character share a variety of reoccurring shapes which unifies them and identifies them that they belong together, the most notable is the preference of squares with a beveled or soft edge. Both marked areas shows a similar use of squares or rectangles with a similar use of beveled or soft edges, even though the marked areas do not serve the same purpose they do show a similar use of shapes.

**Space**

![Space analysis of Halo 4 Chief and Warthog Promo Art](image)

By comparing the width of the front of the vehicle and the back, it is easy to discern the depth of the scene. This is enhanced by the minor atmospheric effect that can be noticed by comparing the detail of the ground of the background and the clearly detailed front wheel of the vehicle.
Texture

The first texture depicts the knee of the character and the use of a gradual value change in combination with sharp edges, resulting in a hard surface that indicates armor on the character. The second texture shows a subtle change of value with a minimal use of lines to describe the picture; the most notable lines present are the fittings of the railing along the edge and the clear outline of the exhaust. There is a slight color change to the hood of the vehicle, which indicates a dirty matte surface. The third texture of the environment clearly differs from the constructed materials on both the main character and the vehicle. This can be seen how the ground of the environment uses irregular lines with very few highlights, often relying upon soft gradual changes in value and shadows that are more notable.
The lines show how the movement in the picture gives the audience a queue on where to look at in the picture. It starts somewhere by the character’s body later to lead the movement to the arm in the distance which is about to punch the creature. This later leads the audience through the creature’s head, following its arm, which the character holds. This creates a loop for the audience and encourages them to repeat the pattern.
Color

Figure 31: Color analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Knight by Author. 2014.

The figure shows the use of a complementary color scheme using a majority of a deep blue, deep green-cyan, the majority of the blue color is used on the creature and the environment while the turquoise color is used on the character to give it a sense of being green. In addition, a use of an orange color is used to contrast the blue colors, this can clearly be seen in details of the creature, its arm and the visor of the character.

Shape

Figure 32: Shape analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Knight, edited by Author. 2014.
By comparing the arms of both the creature and the character, it is easy to see how the shapes of the extremities are represented in different ways. The red marked area of the creature shows how the use of cylindrical shapes, triangles and squares are used to give the arm an idea of a skeletal body, very much like the upper arm of the human body. The green marked area of the character shows a similar representation of human anatomy, this is represented by the use of cylindrical forms, spheres and squares showing a more muscular anatomy compared to the creature’s anatomy.

**Space**

![Space analysis of Halo 4 Chief vs Knight, edited by Author. 2014.](image)

By comparing the character’s hands and shoulders in the picture, it is easy to see the space of the scene and how the perspective deforms the character, making the shoulders and hands closer to the audience appear bigger compared to the shoulder and hands further away. The space is also represented by comparing how the atmospheric effect affects the ground in the picture. The first red marked area shows how the ground has darker values and broader value range compared to the ground further away, this can be seen in the second red marked area.
The first texture shows the trailing effect of the creature’s weapon, this is made by angular jagged lines with soft gradients of transparent color and a few highlights. This creates a notable effect, which seems alien and distinct for the weapon. The texture shows how the details of the character’s armor use dark lines in geometrical patterns; this creates a depth to accentuate the thickness of the armor. It also uses a gradual change of value to emphasize the material it is representing in its ability to reflect light. This can be seen on how strong the light reflects on the shoulder. The third texture shows a clear use of bright lines that follows the form of the creature’s head, giving an idea of light emitting from the creature. It also uses bright lines along the edges of the creature’s head in order to show the sharpness of the edges. It is also easy to identify the use of dark lines to emphasize groves in the structure of the creature. The use of a soft gradual change of value within the highlighted areas also shows how the creature’s material appears to be matte.
3.2.2 Mass Effect Promotional Art Analysis

The following sections present the elements of art analysis of the promotional art of Mass Effect 2, each topic is followed by an image in order to explain the analysis.

Analysis of Promotional Art 1 Mass Effect 2

Line

![Line analysis of Promotional art 1 Mass Effect 2, edited by Author. 2014.](image)

As the lines in the figure show, there are many indications and dynamic movement in the scene. By following the different character’s orientations, it allows the viewer to get a visual aid on where to look at; it also allows the viewer to be introduced to the variety of characters in the picture.

Color

![Color analysis of Promotional art 1 Mass Effect 2 by Author. 2014.](image)

The figure shows the dominant split complementary colors cyan and yellow which create two different areas of context and interest, which allows the viewer to alternate looking between the different areas. The third color deep red color creates a neutral earth tone to the picture, allowing the two dominant colors to be easily distinguished from each other and from the rest of the scene.
Shape

By comparing the different highlighted areas of the picture, it is easy to identify the use of different shapes for the different subjects. In both red areas, the use of sharp triangular shapes in the creatures’ designs makes them easy to discern from the rest of the characters in the scene. In the green areas, it is easy to notice the use of cylindrical shapes, which makes up the basic human anatomy, making it easier for the viewer to identify them as something relatable and a point of interest.

Space

By comparing the different size of the similar subjects in the scene, it is easy for the viewer to discern the depth of the scene. The picture shows a comparison between two characters heads and how the depth makes one of them smaller due to depth.

It is also easy to identify the same appearance of size difference in the heads of the creatures as well. The two cropped out areas also shows a depth within the scene where there are no characters; this gives an idea of the size of the actual room.

Texture
The first texture shows the use of repeating wavelike patterns, making it appear to pulsate that makes it an easily identifiable texture. The second texture shows the texture of an area of a part of the room itself, the use of straight lines, triangles and squares in combination with strong metallic highlights gives an idea that the area is a hard surface and constructed. The third texture shows the head area of one of the creatures, this texture uses a mix between sharp wavelike lines, and round flowing soft lines, this too has a strong highlight in combination with a strong contrasting value too, this gives an idea of a moist texture upon a hard surface giving the creature an insect like appearance.

Analysis of Promotional Art 2 Mass Effect 2

Lines
The line direction in this picture leads the audience to look into the middle of the picture, this by introducing the audience with two characters in the foreground that lead the eye towards the middle by their directional poses, additionally with the third character moving towards the middle. It introduces three characters that seem to work together in order to fight against the creatures in the rest of the picture.

**Color**

![Color analysis](image)

Figure 41: Color analysis of Promotional art 2 Mass Effect 2 by Author. 2014.

The figure shows the use of an analogous color scheme with a dominance of blue and cyan-blue colors throughout the picture, this is both used to create different effect, moods and lighting in the picture. It also contains a minor usage of a deep green-cyan in order to emphasize the blue colors and make the characters stand out a bit from the rest of the picture.

**Shape**

![Shape analysis](image)

Figure 42: Shape analysis of Promotional art 2 Mass Effect 2, edited by Author. 2014.
The enemies shown with red squares share the clear sphere shaped eyes. The bigger enemy in the center shows a major use of angular forms such as triangles and squares upon an organic cylindrical shape that resembles a humanoid skeleton. Having this information, it is easy to apply the same theme for the smaller enemy beside of it, using cylindrical shapes to highlight the ribcage area, this also to show the humanoid skeleton. The characters shown in green squares share many shapes with each other, the use of cylindrical and round shapes showing a very human like body, additionally to emphasize the musculature. Both characters also show a use of soft triangle shapes in the head area.

Space

Figure 43: Space analysis of Promotional art 2 Mass Effect 2, edited by Author. 2014.

A size comparison between the head size and torso size of the character in the foreground and the character in the middle ground shows a clear example on how objects of similar sizes create depth by making them dissimilar. The marked areas show an example of how atmospheric effects show space through contrast values. The first area shows a light armature in the distance. The second area shows the contrast value of a shoulder of a character in the foreground, showing how it uses a broader range of value.

Texture

Figure 44: Texture analysis of Promotional art 2 Mass Effect 2, edited by Author. 2014.
The first texture shows the use of almost straight lines following the muscles of the chest, creating an almost flat surface upon the chest and how the use of a low range of value makes it look like a matte hard surface. There is also a slight use vertical lines on the surface that indicates that it follows the shape of the chest.

The second texture is a great example of the use of color and value change to show the translucency of skin. In addition the use of clear hard edge lines to show the step by step change where the flesh area is more exposed to the light source, and how the translucency diminishes where the bones of the fingers interrupts the light. The third texture depicts an organic structure of the big creature. This is easy to see by looking at the flowing thick blue lines crossed by smaller darker lines, indicating a form of segmented tubes nested in a closed space. The appearance of being in an enclosed space is enhanced by the soft specular highlights that cover some of the tubes on the left of the area.

**Analysis of Promotional Art 3 Mass Effect 2**

**Line**

Figure 45: Line analysis of Promotional art 3 Mass Effect 2, edited by Author. 2014.

The directional lines in this picture lead the audience to the female character and the characters she is shooting at. The character’s movement directed from the center reintroduces the audience to the moving character.
Color

Figure 46: Color analysis of Promotional art 3 Mass Effect 2, by Author. 2014.

The figure shows the use of a split complementary color scheme of red, green and blue with a majority of green color for the environment, making the red tones of the female character clearly standing out and gaining the most attention, in addition with the orange/red details on the walls and the floor. The blue color creates a leading contrast to help the line of movement in the picture, as can be seen in the penetrating holes in the characters on the left. This is also seen in the balcony, capturing the audience’s attention and leading it back to the female character.

Shape and Form

Figure 47: Shape analysis of Promotional art 3 Mass Effect 2, edited by Author. 2014.

Clear shapes of the human anatomy by cylinders and boxes compared to the human anatomy encased of heavy armor. By comparing the red and green areas of the picture, it easy to see how similar shapes can result in different appearances. All three shapes follow a general humanoid anatomy, the red areas to however emphasize the structure of enlarged shoulders and neck areas, where the green area uses the shapes to emphasize a muscular structure on a natural body.
Space

Figure 48: Space analysis of Promotional art 3 Mass Effect 2, edited by Author. 2014.

By comparing the head size of the two characters shown in the picture, it is easy to see that the scene has a very deep space. This is in combination with the leading lines on the floor which naturally shows a perspective distortion by minimizing the gap between the lines the further they are from the audience. Additionally, by comparing the two characters that flares from their bodies, it is easy to see how the atmospheric effect in the environment affects the visibility of the flares.

Texture

Figure 49: Texture analysis of Promotional art 3 Mass Effect 2, edited by Author. 2014.

The first texture shows the use of straight dark lines on a grey area to emphasize a material change on the floor; this creates an idea of drainage in the floor. This is also enhanced by the adjacent material which is a very deep green area with a small amount of value change, indicating the flatness of the area, the use of the orange line upon this area shows how this may be painted on the general floor area.
The second texture shows how the use of thick bright lines creates a flaring effect with force, the force is emphasized by the use of a dark dotted mist substance which would indicate blood, showing the danger of the flares. The third texture shows the usage of straight lines depicting a tiling pattern, giving an idea of how this section of the scene has been built. This is also emphasized by the use of light in order to give the lines a hard contrast to the rest of the scene.
4 Discussion

The following sections discuss how the elements of art in the promotional art of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 communicate the MDA-framework for the audience. First by introducing the MDA-analysis and how the elements of art correlates to it. Both games are then compared with each other in order to investigate how the elements of art for both games communicate differently and similarly.

4.1 The Gameplay and the Elements of Art

As can be seen in the MDA-analysis for both Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 both games are action oriented games which is the reason why they were chosen for this thesis. The analyses show how the games present the action aspects in a different way for both games even if both games are single player games. Halo 4 presents this by having the main character undertaking different missions in order to progress through the levels and solve tasks throughout the game, this by giving the player the choice of using different weapons found in the levels and let the player defeat the enemies needed in order to finish the level. Mass Effect 2 on the other hand often needs the player to rely upon a group of characters in order to progress through the levels and solve different missions by different means, this can mean that the player needs to use different tactics by hide behind covers and shoot over ledges, use special abilities (biotics) to suspend enemies in the air or combine a strong enemy suppression in order to overcome enemies.

Both Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 seem to use the elements of art to contextualize the majority of the gameplay information to the audience through the promotional art used in the analyses. In most cases this seems to be done with use of colors, textures and shapes in the scenes, more often than lines and space. This can be seen in how the colors have been used in Halo 4 where all of the analyzed artworks use the same or similar color palettes; this can of course be a preferable palette choice of the artist. A similar use of color can also be mentioned about Mass Effect 2 where some versions of blue are always present in the scene and can be tied to the gameplay.

4.1.1 Halo 4

As the MDA-analysis show the most notable aspects for Halo 4 are the Challenge, Fantasy, Narrative and Submission aesthetics. These aspects are accentuated through the player’s need of being aware of the two-stage health system, which creates a restriction on how much damage the player’s character can withstand during the game that correlates to the Challenge aspect.

The different kind of enemies the player will encounter during the game also gives the player a variety of challenges, which the player has to overcome in order to progress through the game. Additionally the option to use different kinds of special abilities (when available), weapons and vehicles (when available) gives the player the ability to create its’ own different tactics during the game. This creates a gameplay where the player can immerse into the role of the main character that essentially can take on any task and accomplish them alone; this corresponds to the Fantasy aspect of the MDA-framework.
By having both the Challenge and Fantasy aspect of the MDA-framework in the game, it is easy to see how the Submission comes into play where the player willingly takes the role of the main character in order to progress through the different missions of the game even if they may contain repetitive segments where the player has to overcome a variety of enemies. In order to keep the player motivated through the game Narrative is used as a reward system for the player. The player is introduced to the story from the beginning of the game, and is later given more of story during part of levels through conversations with different characters and by finishing levels in the game which often results in a story through a cinematic cut scene. The Narrative aspect may also be a component which encourages the player immerse into the Submission aspect of the game.

The data show how the elements of art in promotional art for Halo 4 introduce the player to specific information about the gameplay, the MDA-framework, what the player might need to know about the environment and what might be dangerous in the game. A notable example is how the use of movement lines in the promotional art are used to have the main character in full view in the center or near the center of the scene, often with some sort of dangerous element in form an enemy surrounding the character or when the character is under fire. This may create a correlation to the main characters importance of the game and being the central driving force through the narrative of the game and how the main character is portrayed to be able to withstand almost everything and be able to undertake any task that is given to the player and how the player might be able to fight in the game. This also correlates to the Fantasy element of the MDA-framework, which tells the player whom the player takes the roll as in the game, as well as what the character might be capable of doing in the game. In addition a small fragment of the Narrative aesthetic as well where the promotional art communicates a context to the player of what the player might encounter in the game and what obstacles in the form of enemies might be present for the player in the game.

The colors in the promotional art accentuate the difference between the main characters and the enemies in the scenes by showing the enemies in a blue color and how the gun flares uses a similar color. While the main character often is portrayed with a dark cyan color, this gives the player information about how the blue color is related to enemies and what might be dangerous as well as what might be affiliated with the main characters and could be considered to be friendly.

This can also be seen in how the use of shapes separates the enemies from the main characters, where the enemies are portrayed with a triangular shapes and forms with clear sharp edges which can be seen in fig Figure 14 and Figure 16. While the main character is portrayed by using distinctive square and round shapes and forms with softer edges often accentuating the human anatomy. Which clearly differentiates the main character from the rest of the enemies and makes them appear alien compared to the main character. This gives the player the ability to easily differentiate the main character from the enemies, and in addition the ability to identify the different fighting scenarios the promotional art seem to suggest the Challenge and Submission aesthetics to the player.

Giving the player the information of what challenges the player might encounter in the game and what kind of activities might be encountered more often.
There are also differences in texture of both the main character and the enemies where level of detail is more present in texture of the main character, not in a sense of quality but visibility, this makes it easier for the player to discern how the main character’s armor has been designed and how it may be familiar due to the human design and how affiliated objects to the main character might look like. While the textures of the enemies often are smooth and following the overall anatomy of the enemy or are portrayed with damage which reveals parts of the inner workings of the enemy which can give the player an idea of how a fight with these enemies might look like.

4.1.2 Mass Effect 2

The Mass Effect 2 MDA-analysis shows how the use of Challenge, Discovery, Expression, Fantasy, Narrative and Submission creates a wide variety of options for the player to use and experience during the gameplay. One important aesthetic for Mass Effect 2 is how the Expression aspect allows the player to express themselves in the game by creating their own character from the beginning of the game, and later choose how to play this character by choosing to be either good or evil through different actions which can be performed in the game. This can affect what other characters think of the player and the willingness of these characters to follow the player’s choices or to take a stand against them.

The Expression aesthetic also plays together with the Discovery aesthetic where the player can use the different characters in the group to refine tactics suitable for the player and command the characters to perform different actions in some extent. The Discovery aesthetic also allows the player to be able to uncover different possibilities to solve missions, or gain access to back-story for different characters which may allow the player to gain rewards, and in addition the player may also discover positive or negative perks by playing a good or an evil character. This also correlates to the Fantasy aesthetic where the player can immerse into the role of the main character and makes the player aware that choices in the game has consequences. In combination with the Narrative aesthetic which the player is introduced to in the beginning of the game it makes it easier for the player to immerse into the Fantasy aesthetic as well, keeping the player motivated to progress through the story in the game and keeping the player aware of that the choices has consequences and can affect the story.

The Challenge aesthetic of Mass Effect 2 is accentuated by presenting the player to different problems, these can be a part of whether the player should be good or evil in some cases, or simply performing different abilities the player can have, such as bypassing doors or hacking terminals in order to progress through a level.

This is also combined with the Submission aesthetic where the player may have to perform repetitive tasks, as defeating different enemies which the player can encounter during the game and to understand how to defeat these enemies through the use of different tactics within the group the player has chosen in order to progress through the game. Even if the player’s character is the main character in the game, the different aesthetics lets the player understand that teamwork is essential in order to be able to progress through the game. The elements of art in the promotional art for Mass Effect 2 introduces the player to different fragments of information which is important for the gameplay and what the player might be expected to encounter.
A few of the most notable elements are how the movement lines in the artwork introduces the player to the different characters and creatures or enemies in the scene by having one or more characters in the center of the scene which fights different creatures or enemies which often seem to be surrounding the characters.

This creates a connection to how a fighting element in the game can be expected to be experienced, giving the player an idea that teamwork in the group is a good tactic to use for their survival, which also ties into the Fantasy aesthetic of the MDA-framework, giving the player information of what role the player might have in the game. By adding colors the information given to the player becomes clearer considering what may be dangerous to the player, the most apparent color communicating danger seems to be blue in the promotional art, which is depicted through gun flares (Figure 17 and Figure 19), enemies attacks (Figure 17) and the use of special abilities (Figure 18). This also connects to the Fantasy and Challenge aesthetics of the MDA-framework, which communicates what the player will be doing in the game, what the player will encounter and what kind of characters the player might control during the game.

The use of different shapes in the promotional art seems to enhance the information communicated to the player, as the analyses shows the different use of shapes in the artwork seem to have specific uses in order to communicate what might be dangerous or friendly to the player in game. This can be seen in how the shapes are used on the big creature in Figure 18, which uses a base of organic and soft shapes such as cylinders and spheres with contrasting sharp and angular triangles and squares, giving the player an idea that it might be a big and dangerous enemy. A similar notable example can be found in Figure 17 where the enemies on right side of the artwork uses triangular shapes upon a more organic structure in order to convey their danger and are easy to discern from other types of enemies. The use of shapes in order to discern dangerous enemies from friendly characters are also enhanced through the use of cylindrical shapes in the friendly characters design, this can be seen in all figures where the humanoid anatomy is accentuated in this way. The friendly characters are also more personalized in their design compared to the rest of the creatures or enemies in the scenes which seems to be repeated and very similar to each other, this makes it easier to discern the friendly characters from the rest.

In addition, the textures used in the environment, on characters and creatures or enemies and effects can also communicate to the player what to expect and experience in the game. This can be seen how most textures for creatures or enemies are used differently compared to characters, most notably the textures in Figure 17 and Figure 18 where the creatures or enemies are very different from the players characters, this is also as the shapes repeated for each creature or enemies, which also can be seen on the enemy characters in Figure 19. By using the elements of art to communicate danger to the player it is easy to see the connection to how the player will understand what to do in those situations.

The elements of art for Mass Effect 2 does however not show the expressive ability of being good or evil in the game or the consequences that these choices can have upon the game. It does not show the ability to assign commands to different characters within the group in order to develop different preferable tactics, which the player can use. Furthermore, the promotional art does not show the narrative nature of the game, considering the conversational segments existing in the game, which the player relies heavily upon. This also shows that the Expression and Discovery aesthetics of the MDA-framework is not communicated to the player through the promotional art of Mass Effect 2.
4.1.3 Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2

The MDA analyses of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 both show how both games share some aspects in gameplay this can best be showed through the aesthetics of both games, which is due to their similar nature of setting (science fiction) and genre (action shooter).

The most notable aesthetics of Halo 4 are Challenge, Fantasy, Narrative and Submission while Mass Effect 2 contains Challenge, Discovery, Expression, Fantasy, Narrative, and Submission. The similarities lie in the shared aesthetics, which are presented to the player in game, the similarities in Challenge and Submission are the most notable where the player in both games has to undertake a variety of repetitive tasks throughout the game. This is often presented to the player in the form of a mission and often tells the player to defeat different kinds of enemies in order to progress through the game.

Halo 4 often use waves of enemies which the player has to survive and having the activate consoles in the game in order to affect the game world and also destroying objects in the levels in order to progress. Mass Effect also often use waves of enemies in the game, activation of consoles and destroying objects, in some cases the player is presented with alternative solutions for problems which can prevent the killing of enemies by conversation or presenting the player with an alternate route to the mission by letting the player bypass a door.

Both games later rewards the player somehow, these rewards are in both games often presented by narrative progress and letting the player to progress through the game, the reward may also be presented through unlocking abilities for the player in order to make the players character stronger, in the case of Mass Effect 2 this is often done by letting the player choose how the character should become stronger. The most important aesthetic for both games may be the Fantasy aesthetic which both games relies heavily upon in order to keep the player motivated to progress through the game. It also allows the player to immerse into the role of the main character of both games in order to more easily understand how to play the game.

This can be exemplified by how the character of Halo 4 is portrayed to the player, a character which is strong with the purpose of being at war and be good at it, this may give the player the understanding that the character can withstand virtually anything, and do anything considering its purpose. Even if the main character of Mass Effect 2 may be portrayed in a similar fashion it is easy to see how this game also focuses on the importance of the group the character travels with and establishes the importance of teamwork early in the game. This allows the player to command the group with different actions in order to find a suitable fighting tactic which can help the player to progress through the game. The fantasy aspect of Mass Effect 2 also lets the player be more dynamic in the immersion due to the expressive nature of the game, this allows the player to be good or evil in the game which may affect the game, and this is something Halo 4 does not contain.

As can be seen in both analyses of Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 both games uses the elements of art in order to communicate specific MDA information to the player. Both games seem to use the elements of art in a similar way. Even if both games use movement lines in a very similar way in order to introduce the player to the environment and what happens in the scene. Halo 4 seem to focus this upon the main character in order to let player familiarize with the character, while Mass Effect 2 seem to use the movement lines to introduce more characters in the scene in order to communicate the importance of team work for the player.
As can be seen both games uses different color palettes both games uses color in order to depict what might be dangerous for the player in game, in this case both games seem to prefer to use the color blue, which can be argued to be used due to both games science-fiction setting. Both games do in some way represent enemies with a blue color as well as gun flares and in the case of Mass Effect 2 has been applying that color to special abilities as well. A similarity can be found in how shapes and forms are used as well, the use of cylinders, spheres and squares seems to be preferred in order to accentuate the main characters and enhance the human anatomy of the character and relation to the player. Halo 4 seem to be using far more accentuated shapes and form in the design in order to clearly depict a massive human anatomy of the character. While Mass Effect 2 uses similar shapes and forms as Halo 4 but do not accentuate them in the same way making their design more slim than Halo 4s. The use of triangular shapes and forms with sharp and pointy edges seem to be preferred to be used on enemies in both games in order to easily discern them from player’s character. Halo 4 uses these triangular shapes and forms on cylindrical shapes and forms of the enemies in order to depict as skeleton like, where Mass Effect 2 seems to be using them more dynamically depending on the enemy. An example of this is how the insect like enemies of Figure 17 is using mostly triangles while the big central enemy in Figure 18 uses cylinders, squares and triangles in order to give the enemy a more humanlike appearance. This can also be mentioned about the use of texture, it seems to be used in both games in order to both enhance the ability for the player to discern the enemies from the player’s character and to specify what kinds of environments the player might be expected to experience in the game. Both games seem to be using space for the purpose introducing the player to the scale of different enemies and do not seem to be communicating more specific information from the MDA-framework.
5 Conclusion

By starting with the assumption that the elements of art in the promotional art for Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 may communicate small amounts of information of the MDA-framework to the audience. It became clear after the analyses of both the elements of art and the MDA-framework of both games that the promotional art communicated far more information about both games than previously anticipated. Not only did it contain a large quantity of information but also very specific information about what the scene depicted, how it correlated to the gameplay and what the player might expect to experience in the game. Even if the sample size for the analyses was very small and specified, considering the exclusion of environment design, character design and box art and just using the promotional art released by the publisher as well as the exclusion of possible expansions or downloadable content for each game. It also allowed showing the quality of communication of the MDA-framework through the elements of art.

As the promotional art for both Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 shows the elements of art is used in accordance to Sandberg, Crane and Fussell, in how the promotional art for both games uses colors, shapes and forms, lines and textures to contextualize information for the player. In this case the color blue is a very good example of how it is used to show the player that it can dangerous by applying the color to enemies, gun flares and special abilities, allowing the player to understand why it may be dangerous.

This is also seen in how shapes and forms are used to introduce the player of how an enemy looks likes in the game and what might be a friendly character and how to discern the different characters from each other. Which can be seen in how the main character of Halo 4 has shapes and forms squares, cylinders and partly spheres that follows the human anatomy with often are accompanied with soft edges. The use of colors and shapes in order to contextualize information for the player can also be tied with the gestalt principles in visual communication which Lester, Smith et al, Smith and Taylor, Boone and Kurtz treats in their different publications of visual communication. This can be mentioned about how the lines and textures work in the promotional art in order to communicate information to the player. The only element of art that did not seem to communicate information of the MDA-framework was the use of space, a reason for this may be the common usage of space in artwork, photography and media in order to depict depth which makes it hard to specify space as any other communication than the presence of depth.

The promotional art also communicates important aspects of the MDA-framework for both Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2, most notably for each game are the Challenge, Fantasy and Submission aesthetics. As previously explained the promotional art gives context to the player of who the player might control during the game and what the player will do in the game, which connects to the Fantasy aesthetics. More aesthetics are also seen in how the elements of art communicate what encounters the player might experience in the game, what might dangerous and what enemies are encountered which connects it to the Challenge aesthetic, as well as the Submission aesthetic considering what repetitive tasks the player may encounter in the game. By giving the player these contexts of the game it is also possible to argue that small fragments of the Narrative aesthetic is communicated to the player, considering what information is communicated to the player through the promotional art.
Considering the small amount of artwork analyzed and the type of artwork analyzed, it is not surprising that some MDA aesthetics are not present or presented as strongly as Challenge, Fantasy and Submission. In order for the Narrative aesthetic to be more present in both Halo 4 and Mass Effect 2 it would be possible to argue the need of a larger sample size which could contextualize the story of both games better. In the case of Mass Effect 2 both Discovery and Expression are not communicated in the analyzed promotional art, which is not surprising considering the focus on action scenes in the samples which excludes in game social interaction between characters and character development.

Keeping in mind that games chosen for this thesis were to be similar in some aspects (setting and genre) and the sample size of promotional art used for this thesis were chosen due to their similarities in order to investigate how the promotional art for the games communicates their different gameplay, and to investigate the differences and similarities in communication through the elements of art. It is easy to see that the results given provided a large amount of data which can be used to investigate how the promotional art communicate the games MDA-framework, this data can be used accentuate specific information of gameplay for these games.

By expanding the research into a larger sample size of promotional art it may be easier to further investigate how more information of the MDA-framework is communicated to the player. It can also be expanded by introducing a larger sample of games in order to investigate how a larger sample of similar genres use the elements of art to communicate the gameplay to the player, or how a larger sample size of different genres of games use the elements of art in order to communicate the gameplay to the player.

It could also be very interesting to investigate how the elements of art in promotional art may be communicating different gameplay aspects depending on which culture the promotional art and game is released in, which may lead to an understanding in how to communicate effectively with different cultures through the elements of art.
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