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DIGM T580:Designing In VR
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Designing In VR Final: Forest Cafe

Overview

My final project idea is a virtual world that brings nature into a virtual space. Since the pandemic has started, many people have not been able to enjoy nature the same way they have before. The feeling that nature gives you is irreplaceable but my virtual world will mimic that feeling as best as possible. The space I have thought of creating would be an open cafe, that would give off the aura of a cafe in the woods. I

used to frequent cafes with my friends before the pandemic and it is something I miss immensely. The feeling of a cafe always reminds me of just chatting with friends, so I would like to incorporate that feeling into my virtual world.
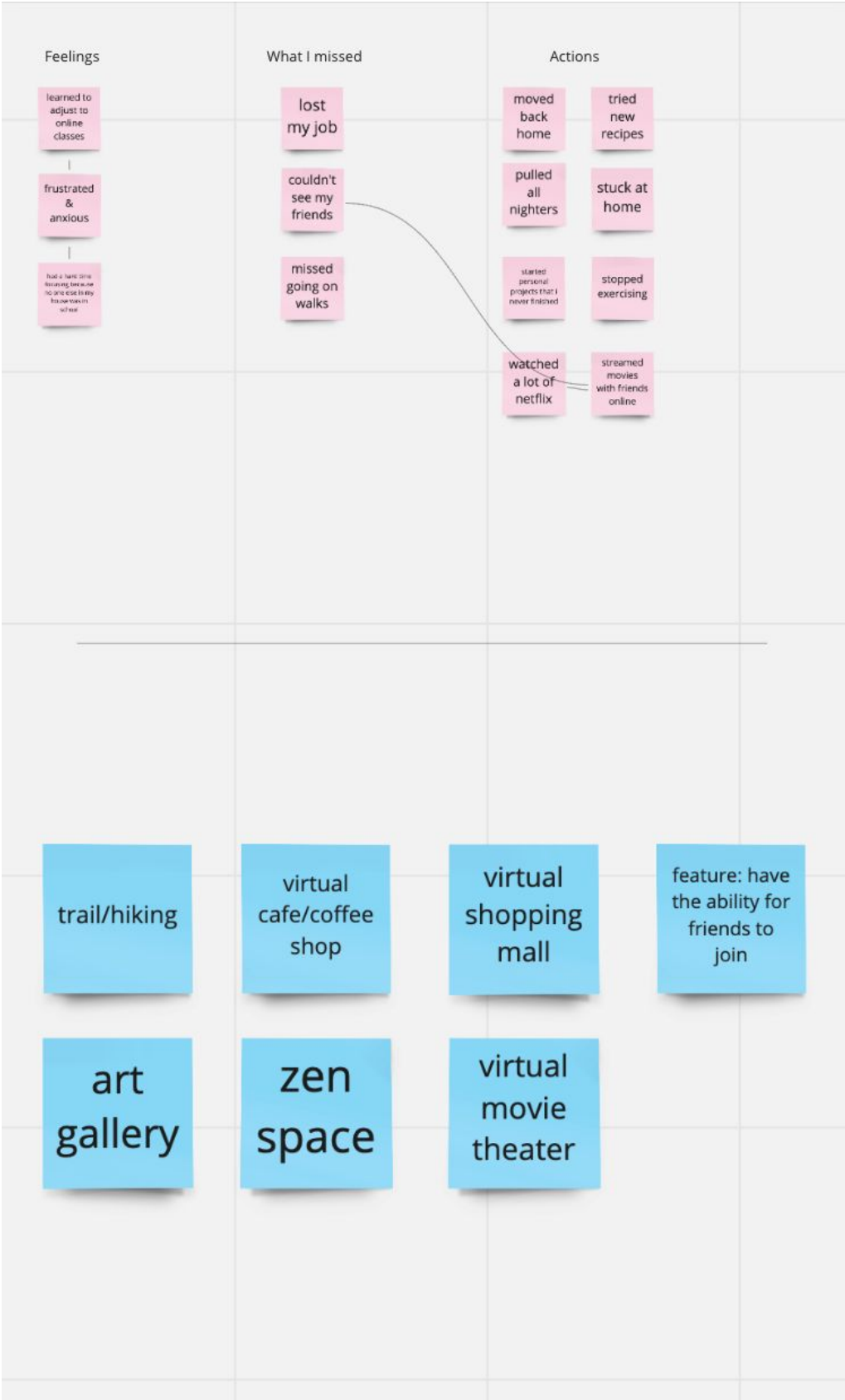
Another important aspect of the virtual world is its natural aspect. Nature is very important and it is a huge topic currently. Many people, such as myself, live in huge cities and don't often experience nature. My virtual world will allow people to experience the outdoors. The combination of a man-made cafe and nature allows users to not feel completely lost in nature because they will still have a structure to return to.

The purpose of this virtual world is to create a safe space where friends can meet. As I mentioned before, my friends and I used to hangout at cafes, so creating a virtual version of that will bring a feeling of nostalgia even though it is a new virtual world. Implementing elements such as tree trunk seats and tables, wooden mugs and bowls, and even a playlist of birds chirping faintly in the background will help make this world feel realistic.

Process

Brainstorming

To start this project, I started jotting down words that described how I felt, things I missed, and what actions I took during quarantine. I created an affinity map based on all of the words I had written. This allowed me to categorize all of my words into three groups: "Feelings", "What I missed" , and "Actions". Below that, I jotted down some ideas for a virtual world that I could invite my friends to.

Feelings

learned to adjust to online classes

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frustrated & anxious

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had a hard time focusing because no one else in my house was in school

What I missed

lost my job

couldn't see my friends

missed going on walks

Actions

moved back home

tried new recipes

pulled all nighters

stuck at home

started personal projects that I never finished

stopped exercising

watched a lot of netflix

streamed movies with friends online

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trail/hiking

virtual cafe/coffee shop

virtual shopping mall

feature: have the ability for friends to join

art gallery

zen space

virtual movie theater

I live in a big city and I can't go on a hike or wander the woods like other people can, so I decided to create a cafe that uses elements of nature within it. I brainstormed ideas for that as well and created moodboards for my idea.

Building

I have built my entire virtual world in Google Tilt Brush, it was my favorite tool to use. I started out by selected premade 3D- Models that would fit the aesthetic of my world and imported those into my scene. From there I used my color palette and started creating trees and bushes in Tilt Brush. It was quite easy because of Tilt Brush's simple UI. I was able to duplicate most of my assets to help me build my world even quicker. My goal was to make a very large forest that users can get lost in, but I was having issues because my file size was getting too big to export to Google Poly so I had to limit it.

Uploading

After designing my world in Google Tilt Brush, I uploaded it to Google Poly. I ran into some issues here while trying to upload, because as I mentioned earlier, my file size was very big and failed multiple times while I tried to upload. I had to go back and alter my design a little bit but in the end it was uploaded to Poly.

I then imported my 3D model to Unity. I added a plane and played around with the sizing of my 3D model then uploaded it to AltspaceVR. My file was still a little too

big, it was over 200MB so I had to go back and group a few assets, but I eventually got it to upload to AltspaceVR successfully.

Tools

During this class, I was introduced to many tools that would help me build this project. These tools are: Miro, Google Tilt Brush, Google Poly, Masterpiece Studio, Masterpiece Creator and Masterpiece Motion, Tvori, and AltspaceVR. These tools were all great to work with, but I definitely gravitated to some more than others. My favorite tool is Google Tilt Brush. The UI of the software was very easy to understand and all the features were readily available. I also enjoyed the dynamic brushes they offered, I used some of these brushes in my virtual world to give it more of a realistic feel.

The tools I liked the least were Masterpiece Creator and Masterpiece Motion. Masterpiece Creator had a similar concept to Tilt Brush but the UI was not as polished. Although these softwares have not been around for a long time, they are still great tools, they just need a little more work.

Outcomes & Results

The virtual Forest Cafe that I have created for my final project turned out better than I expected. At first I wasn't sure if my world would live up to the expectations I had in my head, but I think it came out even better. I really enjoyed creating my Forest Cafe virtual world and being able to experience it with my peers and professors through VR. It was a great gateway into the world of VR and I will definitely add more to my virtual world in the future.

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