

Varun Saxena

Game Designer, Artist and Educator

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Professional Profile

I am a game designer, artist and educator based in Brooklyn, NY and originally from Mumbai, India. I want to use my background in games, animation and filmmaking to depict new-age storytelling that explores the cross-section of culture, diversity and human intimacy which are a few of the topics I am most interested in.

Career Summary

08/2021 – present **CUNY- Hostos Community College, Bronx, NY**
Adjunct Assistant Professor

Outline

I am currently teaching- “Intro to Digital Games” to Associate level students. The class introduces students to concepts of game mechanics, game theory and digital game production by affording them the opportunity to read about game development, play test several different video games and finally create their own digital game using important industry standard development tools like Unity3D.

Key Responsibilities

- Gave weekly lectures in a hybrid format on various topics like- game mechanics, UI design, Multiplayer Design, Monetization, etc.
- Introduced students to game engines by teaching them Unity3D and C# scripting.
- Guided, mentored and provided feedback to students throughout the development of their first digital games and design documents.
- Enabled students to learn iterative game design practices by holding in-class playtesting sessions and enforcing them to give/receive constructive criticism to one another.
- Prepared and carried out group exercises and activities which involved students studying in-person as well as those online.
- Successfully enforced University’s COVID-19 safety mandates in the classroom and completed an entire semester with zero cases of infection.

09/2020 – 05/2021 **NYU Game Center, Brooklyn, NY**
Teaching Assistant

Outline

I worked as a Teaching Assistant in Fall 2020 for Prof. Eric Zimmerman and in Spring 2021 for Prof. Jesse Fuchs in their class- “Intermediate Game Design” for BFA Students at NYU Game Center.

Key Responsibilities

- Helping out Professor and Students with online class management in Zoom
- Carrying out in-class exercises in 3D level design and game economy balancing sections.
- Checking in on assignments and providing feedback on students’ work.
- Managing class attendance and initiating students’ communication with the professors.

09/2020 – present

NYU Game Center, Brooklyn, NY

Thesis Research and Development- Waiting For Evening

Outline

For my MFA degree’s thesis, I designed and created “Waiting For Evening” a 3D narrative-adventure video game with a unique point-&-click gameplay, an original story set in an atmospheric world and developed along with Alina Constantin- an artist, indie game designer and a fellow NYU graduate degree colleague.

Key Responsibilities

- Used Unity3D, C# and Fungus- a visual storytelling tool to create and script the entire game project.
- Worked over two academic semesters to bring my original idea from conception to prototype to finally a vertical slice demo that was shown at NYU Game Center Annual Showcase 2021.
- Researched on post-colonial narratives along with studying the lifestyle, architecture, environments, cinema and popular culture of Bombay (now Mumbai), India to craft an original narrative with a diverse set of characters.
- Followed a 3-week sprints based production schedule made using Trello, to complete the thesis project before deadlines.
- Showcased the latest version of the game as a part of an indie game event at Wonderville in Brooklyn, NY (October 2021).

09/2020 – 12/2020

NYC Media Lab and Consumer Reports, Brooklyn, NY

Narrative Designer and Developer- Ganesha’s Terms

Outline

"Ganesha's Terms" is a symbolic allegory about data, privacy and consent through an interactive card reading. It was created and selected as a part of NYC Media Lab’s – Consumer Reports Data Challenge in Fall 2020.

Key Responsibilities

- Acted as the primary narrative designer by creating narrative flow charts and visual maps to depict characters from the Hindu myth of Ganesha with their parallels to modern-day terms related to data, consent and online privacy.
- Worked with other teammates to form a three-month long schedule with sprints for completing a prototype of the project within the constraints of Consumer Reports' deadlines.
- Used Unity and C# to create an initial functional prototype for the project, which later went through multiple iterations and refactoring to reach the demo prototype stage.

02/2020

**Beers and Betas, Brooklyn Brewery, Brooklyn, NY
Game Designer - No Honor Among Thieves**

Outline

Publicly showcased and facilitated playthroughs of my social board game with an engaging concept and fast gameplay at a relaxed bar setting along with other members of the design team.

01/2020

**Global Game Jam 2020, Brooklyn, NY
Game Designer - New Trees**

Outline

Created a short walking simulator game with atmospheric visuals and a unique narrative in a team of three people, within 48 hours as a part of Global Game Jam 2020. The game won the award for "Best Visuals" at the NYU Game Center site.

11/2018

**Indian Games Expo 2018, Mumbai, India
Game Designer**

Outline

Designed and directed a live-action FMV murder mystery game for my college. The prototype was then showcased at Indian Games Expo (IGX) 2018, which is the biggest and most popular public games expo in India.

Education & Qualifications

- **M.F.A. in Game Design, 2019-2021**
New York University - Tisch School of the Arts
- **B.S. in Animation and Filmmaking, 2016-2019**
Tata Institute of Social Sciences - Whistling Woods International