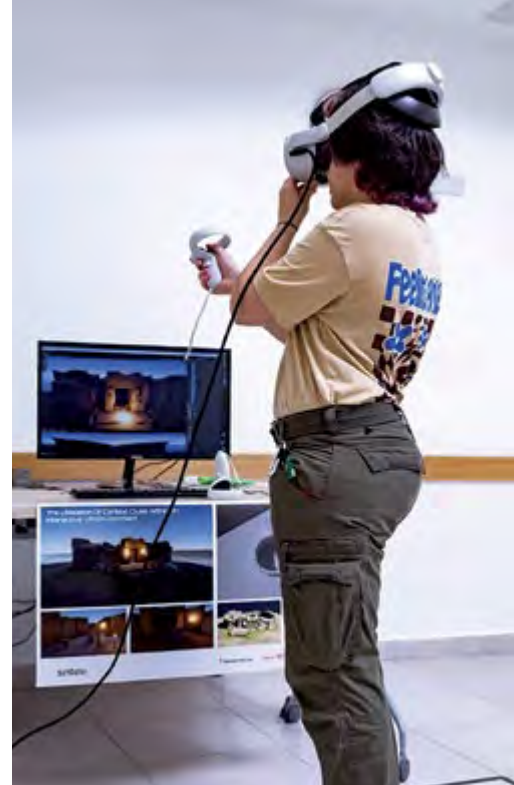




Exploration of Immersion within Virtual Reality Games

Ellie Abela

My project revolves around the word 'immersion'. More specifically, what determines whether a video game is considered immersive or not. This is not an easy or straightforward task, since immersion is an incredibly abstract concept that does not have a single definition, but instead different interpretations depending on specific contexts.

My context was the world of virtual reality (VR). In fact, for my project, I created a VR game entirely from scratch. This was a long but rewarding process, consisting of hours of coding, painting, 3D modelling, and many other tasks that eventually led to a complete game which was then tested and played during the 2023 Digital Arts exhibition, *Sintesi* at UM.

My virtual reality game is set within a Megalithic temple. Within

this temple, the player faces several puzzles, which they must complete by interacting with objects in different ways in the game. Players are not given any instructions or hints and explore of their own accord. This process was incredibly interesting. Everyone interacted with the game in their own way and, a lot of the time, in ways that I never anticipated. Some blasted through each puzzle, solving them all in only a few minutes, while others preferred to explore the temple for a while before even attempting one of the puzzles.

What was most fascinating to me was how many of the people that tested out my game completely forgot the real space they were in. For example, a part of the temple's floor is at an incline, and due to this, some of the players lifted up their feet as they took a step despite the

fact that, in reality, the room's floor was flat. Even though this was unintentional, it proved to be a detail that shed light on how easily immersed players can be. Another example of this happened once players were returning the VR equipment. Since the game required two VR controllers and a headset to be played, they needed to set both controllers down before being able to remove the headset. A surprising amount of people accidentally dropped the controllers on the floor because they tried to set them down on a surface that was in the game!

Overall, this entire experience was really fun and taught me a variety of skills that have proven to be quite useful for the game development and concept artist career I am aspiring to follow. 

Images courtesy of Ellie Abela