

RUBEN RUNHARDT

Lead / Principal Gameplay Designer

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PROFILE:

Versatile and technical **Gameplay Designer** with 10+ years of experience, specializing in immersive gameplay and taking core mechanics from initial prototyping to final polish, with a proven track record of translating complex IP, such as *Metro* and *Assassin's Creed*, into high-quality immersive experiences.

Currently working as **Lead Game Designer** at Vertigo Studios Amsterdam, where I manage a small team of designers and develop immersive tactile gameplay for high-profile titles with **UE5**.

SKILLS:

DESIGN: *Gameplay Design, Rapid Prototyping, Systems Design, AI Behavior (EQS, HTN, State Machines), Virtual Reality UX, Documentation, Level Design, Combat Design*

SOFT SKILLS: *Cross-Discipline Communication, Team Leadership, Mentoring, Project Planning, Public Speaking*

TOOLS: *Unreal Engine 4 & 5 (Advanced: Blueprints, Modular Object-Oriented Architecture, Sequencer, Physics, Animation Blueprints, EQS, Blueprint Utilities), Unity (Proficient), Godot (Proficient), JIRA / Confluence, P4V, Microsoft Office, Google Workspace*

LANGUAGES: *English (Fluent), Dutch (Native)*

EXPERIENCE:

The projects below reflect my 10-year journey from intern to Lead Game Designer at Vertigo Studios Amsterdam (formerly Force Field XR). Working within the studio's healthy, structured, overtime-averse culture has fundamentally taught me the ability to align creative vision with realistic production constraints through pragmatic scoping, efficient planning and ruthless prioritization. I'm deeply grateful for this solid foundation to my career.

NDA AAA IP VR PROJECT | Lead Game Designer

Dec 2024 - Present | Vertigo Studios Amsterdam

- **Stepped up as acting Lead Designer** for the feature team, responsible for championing the gameplay vision alongside the game director, cross-discipline cooperation, project planning, mentoring of 4 designers ranging from intern to senior, establishing workflows and hosting studio-wide designer meetings.
- **Translated existing AAA IP to immersive and fun VR** through hands-on prototyping and iteration of core gameplay, including mechanics such as puzzles, guns, a bow, player tools and a final boss fight.
- **Oversaw the development of gameplay within the multi-disciplinary feature team**, including core locomotion like climbing, swimming and platforming as well as puzzle features, interactions and AI enemies.
- **Initiated new workflows** such as the creation of Gameplay Blocks / Gyms, which were intended to establish metrics, discover the limits of our gameplay features and provide the level design team with reference.

METRO AWAKENING | Principal Gameplay Designer

Nov 2021 - Dec 2024 | Vertigo Studios Amsterdam

- **Championed an immersive, tactile player experience** with a heavy focus on recreating the Metro game atmosphere through haptics for multiple platforms such as PSVR2, virtual friction and realistic weapon design.
- **Presented at the Indigo Conference** on how we achieved the illusion of tactility, with a [recording online here](#).
- **Architected and oversaw core framework systems for interaction**; kinematic hand movement, player interactions, animated interactions and "friction" constraints inherited from the default Unreal physics.
- **Oversaw the creation of prototypes, core systems and interactions** through discussions, reviews and feedback with the gameplay programmers and designers, ensuring we met the quality levels within scope.
- **Prototyped and refined complex AI** using EQS, HTN behaviors and state machines, primarily focused on stealth mechanics, human firing behavior, taking cover, hit reactions and all the spider AI.

EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT FOR UBISOFT | Senior Game Designer

Mar 2021 - Nov 2021 | Force Field XR

- **Analyzed core IP and distilled research into functional design documentation** for stealth gameplay during early pre-production of the cancelled **Splinter Cell VR**.
- **Established UX and puzzle designs** for a diegetic mixed reality environment that acts as an introduction and anchor point throughout the game campaign for **Assassin's Creed Nexus**.
- **Prototyped puzzles and UX flow using Unreal Engine** and oversaw implementation within Unity.

UNRELEASED AAA VR GAME DEMOS | Senior Game Designer

Nov 2019 - Mar 2021 | Force Field XR

- **Prototyped gameplay** for a series of demos and pre-production for a project based on existing AAA IP.
- **Translated existing mechanics from AAA IP to VR** for weapons, AI, interactions and vehicle controls.
- **Oversaw and implemented framework systems** such as flow beats, sequencer cinematics and player hands.
- **Reworked a demo to improve extendibility** and strip it of NDA IP. Designed replacement AI and made weapons feel more powerful with ragdolls and improved hit reactions.
- **Experimented with new tools and workflows** like using VR hardware to concept spaces in Gravity Sketch and Microsoft Maquette and using VR hardware to create internal mocap using Sequence Recording in UE4.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORE VR | Game Designer

Aug 2019 - Nov 2019 | Force Field XR

- **Implemented level flow and objective logic**, alongside sequence scripting for the Machu Picchu update.

TIME STALL | Primary Game Designer

Jun 2017 - Aug 2019 | Force Field XR

- **Spearheaded early prototyping to showcase unknown, unreleased VR hardware**, establishing core logic and supporting the tech team in setting up production workflows.
- **Designed interactive 'cinematics'** with a blend of interaction design, level design, puzzle design, directing animation, staging and setup using the sequencer.
- **Developed and balanced physics interactions**, interactive player tools and AI with emergent behavior.
- **Acted as the central design pillar**, the 'primary' under a game director, managing additional features such as UI, localization, performance optimization, playtest analysis, project planning and mentoring an intern.

TERM1NAL | Junior Game Designer

Nov 2016 - May 2017 | Force Field XR

- **Established core level design rules** and new mechanics through rapid prototyping shortly after joining during a project reboot.
- **Handled level design and implementation** of several chapters, including cinematics.
- **Took ownership over mini-games**, difficulty progression, tutorials and UX improvements.

LANDFALL | Junior Game Designer

Sep 2015 - Nov 2016 | Force Field XR

- **Created gameplay prototypes** for core features such as the walkers and bespoke mission objectives after proving myself during the first months of my internship.
- **Designed levels** for a large part of the player campaign and multiplayer versus maps.
- **Tackled gameplay balancing** through daily playtesting and tweaking of core mechanics.

EDUCATION

GAME DESIGN AND PRODUCTION BACHELOR

NHTV Breda International Game Architecture and Design | 2012 - 2016 | Graduated Cum Laude

HOBBY INTERESTS

Action-Adventure Games, Roguelike Games, MMOs, Boardgames like Slay the Spire, Azul and Mysterium, Cooking, Pixel Art, Lego, Gardening, Watching TV while cuddling with my cats.