# MY DESIGN INTENT

## Introduction

"... form ever follows function..." (Sullivan, 1896). This was written in a magazine back in 1896 by architect Louis Sullivan. However, this design philosophy does not only apply to architecture; in fact, it is part of my method in approaching level design. In fact, one of the first few things that I learnt in DigiPen Bilbao was to imagine how a normal person would utilize the space that you created. In this report, I will discuss my work, my past approach, and how I've changed and managed to develop a workflow to create something believable and fun for players.

## Methodology

### Believable is Natural

Using empathy, I realised that, if I could put myself in the shoes of the person who lives in a situation, what are the things that I would want given different constraints: time period and eras, wealth and poverty, space and the lack thereof, etc. These were what I would apply to myself before I start any level design and what made my level designs feel "natural". In fact, the word I would use now is, believable. Something natural to one might be unnatural to another; an alien might not use the same facilities that we require. However, if we make something that is believable to that person/environment, then that can invoke a sense of naturalness to the design of the space itself.

### Inspiration: Similar yet Different

Inspiration is powerful, but unreliable. Playing on the idea of not reinventing the wheel, I would apply this to make something "Similar yet different." Most media exist in some form or another, be it in music, videos, or games. What's important is what separates that, and in this case, this is what I would focus on. Difference is more often than not what makes an idea unique. In fact, I have had many instances where this method would trigger a new Inspiration of its own.

## Projects

The strongest examples of the application of my workflow as of 2026 were displayed in the following projects. Here, I was able to apply my approach to arrive at environments that were both believable and, at times, help players anticipate what is to come through conditioning or expectations.

# One Way Out

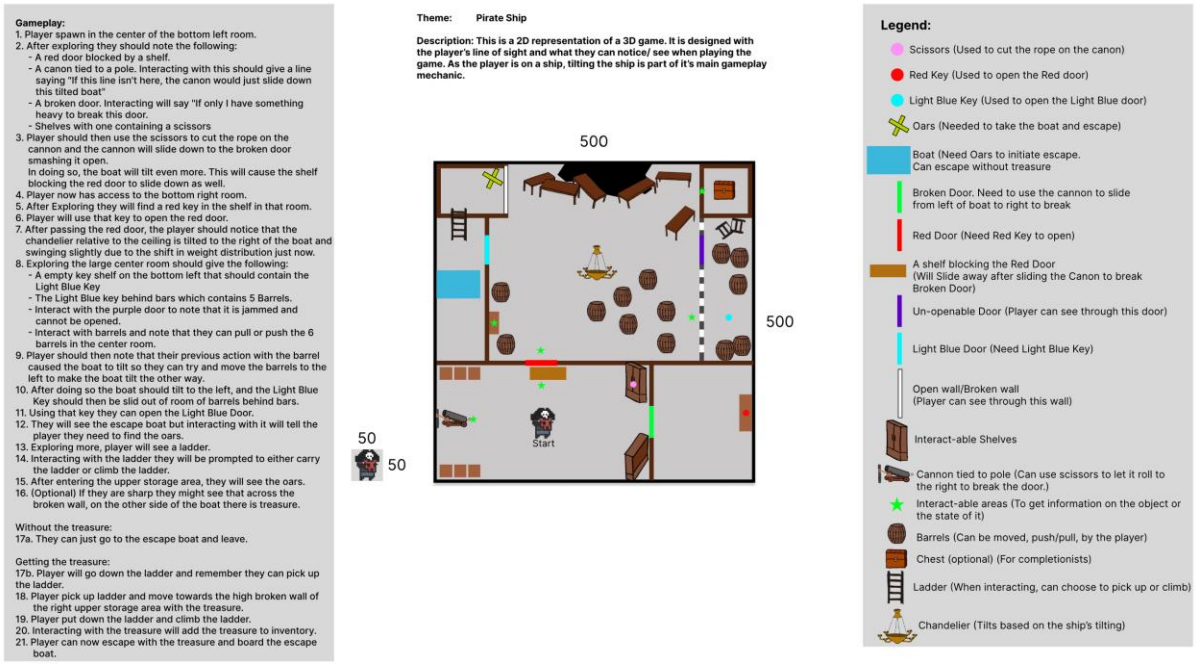



*Fig.1.1 Design PDF of One Way Out*

The theme here is a pirate ship. The main concept was to play with the idea of tilting and perspective. The designed map was meant to be made as a 3D game, such that all the visual storytelling, foreshadowing, and visual hints would assist the player in finding their way through the escape room.

## Process

To have an environment that changes to solve puzzles, I chose the setting of a ship. Using the existing knowledge of players where weight can dictate the tilt of an object in the ocean, I used a chandelier to indicate the tilt of the ship. This then foreshadows that other items could be shifted with the tilt. Being a design of a 3D space, I realised player perspective can be exploited as well; therefore, it was made such that in the process of clearing the game, the treasure is visible and acts as a hint on how to collect it.

# WFH 1

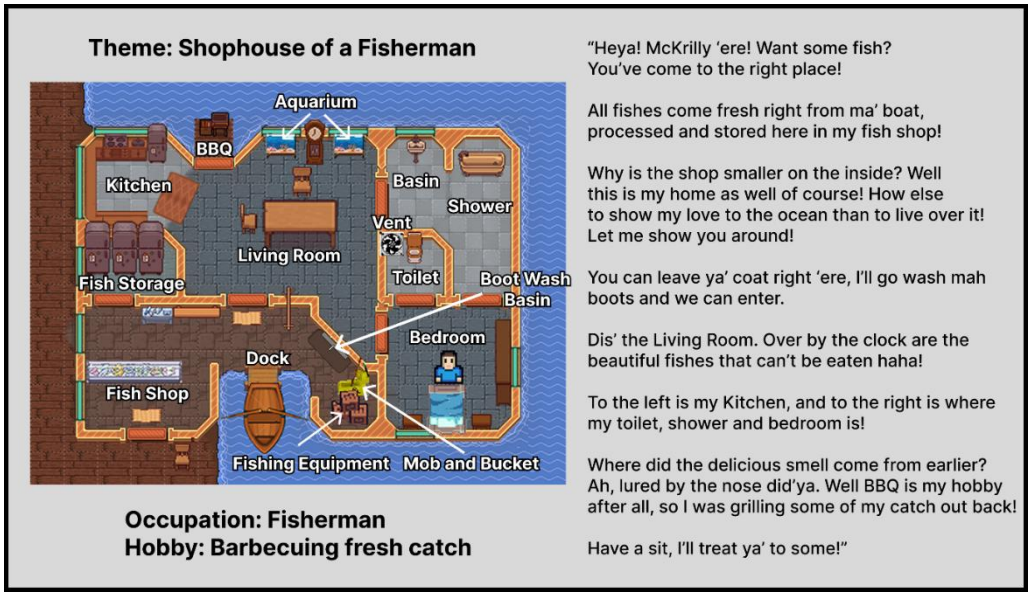



*Fig. 2.1 Annotated Version of the WFH Map*

Looking at Fig. 2 .1, it is quickly understood that this is the home of a fisherman. I may look unimpressive to some, normal to others. That is, in fact, mission accomplished.

## Process

The goal was to make something believable. I considered what the most interesting depiction of a unique house is. The answer: Vietnam's floating homes. From there, I thought, people who live in such places would be hard-pressed to get food as we do, meaning they'd likely rely on fishing. From there, I recalled that there was a unique home from Stardew Valley, Willy's Home. He had a boat in the back, but the layout and facilities of his home never quite made sense to me. Therefore, I made it my goal to make a more believable version of Willy's Home.

# 4-Koma

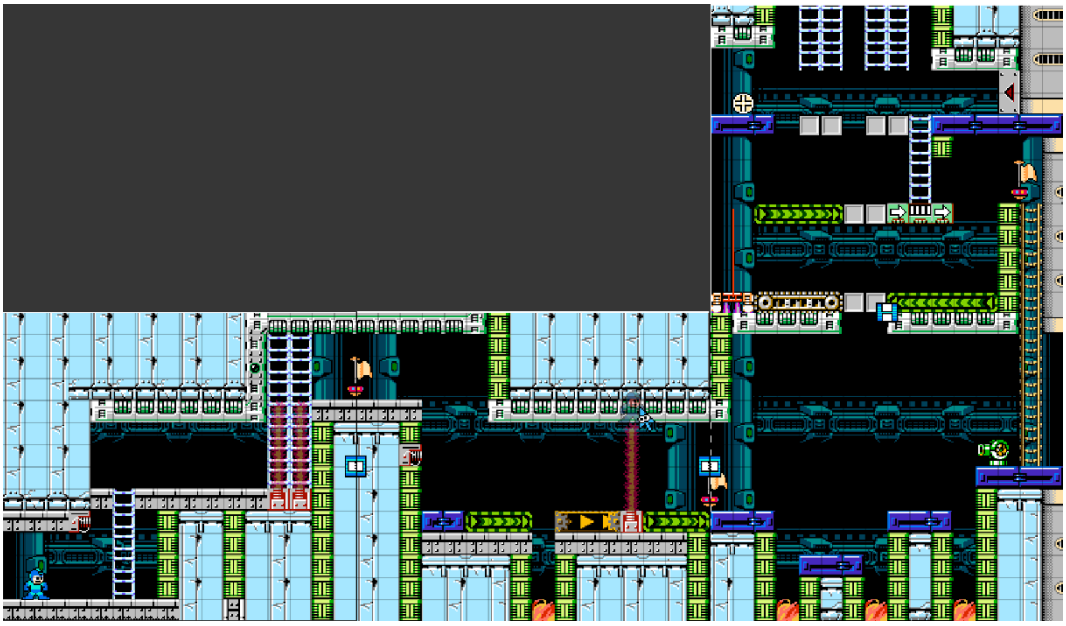


*Fig 3.1 Design of the Map for 4-Koma*

This project is done using the Open-Source software Mega Man Maker. My main goal for this design is, despite Mega Man being a game where you're meant to "Run and Gun," what if a level made environmental hazards the main focus instead?

**Mechanics**

A: Timing a climb past fire pillar activation
B: Ladder Hopping
C: Momentum Control at medium speed
D: Jumping
E: Shooting

A': Timing a fall past a fire pillar activation
A'': Timing a disappearing block
A''': Timing a Moving Platform
A'''': Timing disappearing block while avoiding projectile

C': Momentum Control with low speed
C'': Momentum Control with high speed

( ): *Parenthesis is used if there is an optional mechanism that can be used.*

**Zone Cadence**

| Zone | Screen | Cadence | Intensity |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | A | 1 / 5 |
| 2 | 1 | A' + B | 3 / 5 |
| 3 | 2 | A | 1 / 5 |
| 4 | 2 | C + D | 2 / 5 |
| 5 | 2 | C' + A | 2 / 5 |
| 6 | 3 | D | 1 / 5 |
| 7 | 3 | D + E | 3 / 5 |
| 8 | 3 | D | 1 / 5 |
| 9 | 4 | A'' + C | 2 / 5 |
| 10 | 4 | A''' + C'' | 4 / 5 |
| 11 | 4 | A'' + C | 2 / 5 |
| 12 | 4 | C'' | 3 / 5 |
| 13 | 4 | A'''' + D (+ B) | 5 / 5 |
| 14 | 4 | A'''' + D (+ B) | 4 / 5 |

*Fig 3.2 Mechanics and Cadence of 4-Koma*

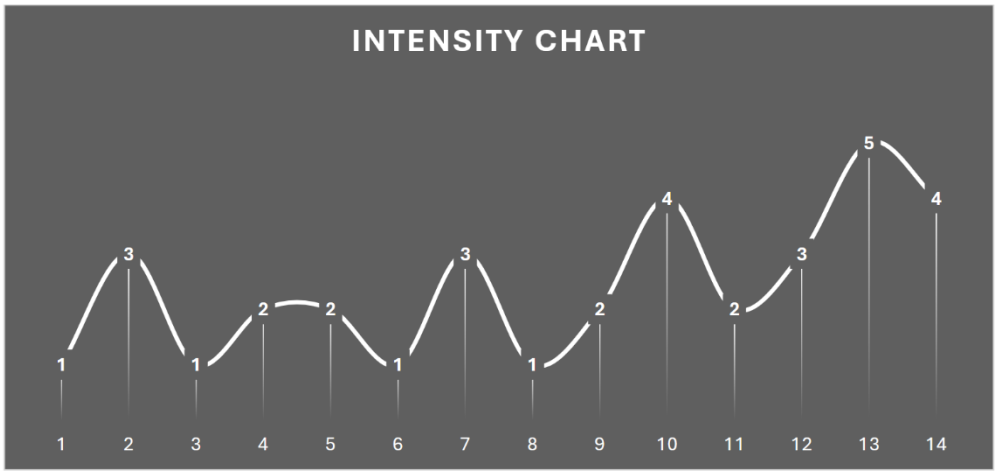



*Fig 3.3 Intensity Chart of 4-Koma*

### Process

Due to my lack of experience with platformers, this is one of the examples where I did not get any insight to work from, so I first went through all the blocks and items that were available to me and kept a mental note of what I had at my disposal. From there, I threw everything into a level, replicating the feeling of speed from my favourite platformer, Celeste (Similar yet Different), and tried to identify what felt enjoyable to play. After which, I discussed with people around me regarding cadence, and that's when an insight into the level structure emerged. From there, it was a matter of tightening the player experience and how they will feel as they play the game.

## Conclusion

My design philosophy circles back to the idea Sullivan captured over a century ago: form should follow function. For me, that means believability, spaces shaped by empathy and constraint rather than aesthetic instinct alone. Getting there meant moving past the assumption that "natural" meant chaotic or symmetrical, and learning to design from the perspective of who a space is for. I've also come to understand my own process better: Inspiration drives my strongest work, but since it isn't always reliable, I built a method around it to keep moving even when the vision isn't there yet. Across One Way Out, WFH 1, and 4-Koma, this approach has held up across different genres and constraints, and I expect it to keep evolving as I take on more complex projects

## Reference

Sullivan, L. H. (1896). *The tall office building artistically considered*. Lippincott's Magazine. MIT OpenCourseWare. https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/1-012-introduction-to-civil-engineering-design-spring-2002/pages/readings/the-tall-office-building-artistically-considered/