

Peter Manning

April 25, 2016

Experimental Game Design

Celia Pearce

### **Project 4 – “Magritte’s Lovers”**

“Magritte’s Lovers” was an attempt at inciting intimacy via the introduction of physical barriers. Partially an adaptation of Rene Magritte’s “The Lovers,” the game challenges the painting’s statement about the emotional barriers in modern society through participation. In itself, “Magritte’s Lovers” is deceptively straightforward: two players attempt to solve a jigsaw puzzle while wearing bags on their heads. The actual puzzle is incidental to the playing, although the fact that the image on the puzzle is a representation of the Magritte painting is relevant to the core statement of the piece.

Rene Magritte’s painting “The Lovers” is a famous oil painting of a man and a woman kissing while they are both wearing bags on their heads. The painting embodies much of Magritte’s surrealist ideology while seeking to make a statement about the hypocrisy of affectionate displays between the emotionally distant people of modern society. “Magritte’s Lovers” is an attempt to demonstrate that statement by undoing the emotional barriers between the participants. When the two players are attempting to solve the puzzle while wearing bags on their heads, they are forced to communicate constantly in order to succeed.

Apart from Magritte himself, the biggest influence in this piece is Yoko Ono. More specifically, the idea of Bagism heavily influenced the underlying concepts of the game. While Bagism sought to use anonymity as a way to foster communication between two people and a larger group, “Magritte’s Lovers” incorporates the principles of the ‘magic circle’ to craft a much more personal experience. Knowing that you are one of two people involved in this task is a mark of encouragement- you have a compatriot, a fellow traveler on this road.

The actual experience of “Magritte’s Lovers” is both emotional and physical. The players begin in a state of discomfort and frustration as they struggle first with the impairment of their senses, and then with the lack of clear feedback on their progress. As the game continues, they grapple with the challenge until they understand that they need to work together. In the end, they overcome the challenge and recognize each other as complete emotional beings.

Further iterations of the game would seek to reduce the actual challenge of the piece. Among other changes, the edges would be made more physically distinct from one another, so that the players could more easily know when they had correctly fitted them together. Additionally, the game will be played in a quiet and moderately cold space with no time limit, as external distractions and stress factors reduce the effectiveness of the piece. “Magritte’s Lovers” is about learning to be emotionally intimate with another person, and it is in many ways a success.