

Style Guide: Process

Mockup for information display in-game:



Game Intro

Elevator pitch: Disaster strikes an expedition to the South Pole. The team must escape the treacherous landscape of Antarctica using limited knowledge and resources to rendezvous with their ship. A grueling indie survival simulator in a top-down procedurally generated environment. For fans of Don't Starve and Sons of the Forest.

This game concept is the result of discussions between Zach Whitaker and myself. UI elements and visual identity in this prototype are my work. I produced this style guide for a class in graphic design for games at Uppsala University in Sweden.

Prior to imagining this game, I'd researched and written a pair of short stories that take place in Antarctica, 1911. I draw inspiration from that historic context, during the peak of the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration.

Keywords for aesthetic: scarcity, danger, teamwork. In visual form: scratch lines, starved or bloated shapes, unstable compositions, fading color or opacity, etc.

Typography

In relevant primary-source documents, I noticed the frequent use of sans-serifs for military or technical materials, often as headings in documents, with the text being oldstyle or transitional serifs. Headings (Bild Poster) and text (Averia Serif Libre) typography begin with this principle. The typography looks as if it's been left to freeze over or erode in the wind and snow.

Heading *Minimal weathering = decent condition*

Heading *Excessive weathering = critical condition*

Subhead Label **ACTION**

Subhead Label **ACTION**

The game can communicate danger through the axis of distortion, pushing the UI towards illegibility. I tried a range of textures and effects before deciding the baseline would be simple and diagrammatic. Ice everywhere could be dramatic but makes for excess embellishment, not scarcity.







(1–3) My photos from personally visiting the Scott Polar Institute at Cambridge.

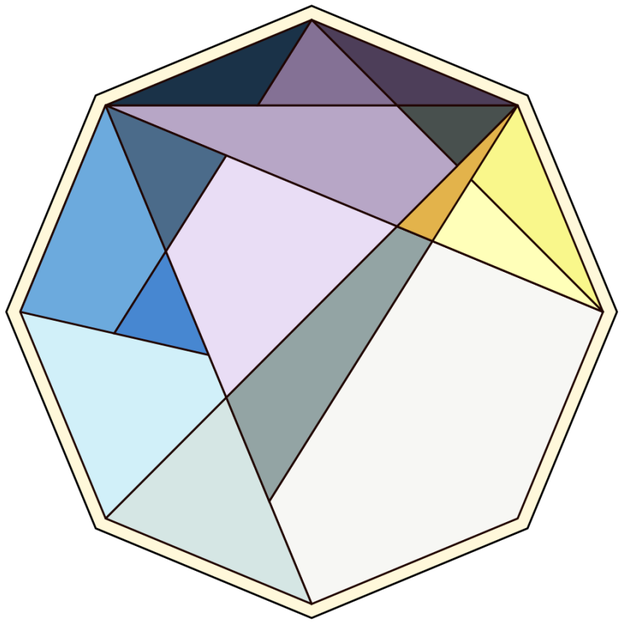
(4) From photo collection at antarctic-heritage.recollect.co.nz/

(5) R. Amundsen diary at www.bokselskap.no/boker/slededagbok/september-1911

(6) Levick's Notebook at antarctic-heritage.recollect.co.nz/

(7) Page from E. Shackleton's diary at www.spri.cam.ac.uk/archives/shackleton/images/p3291803.html

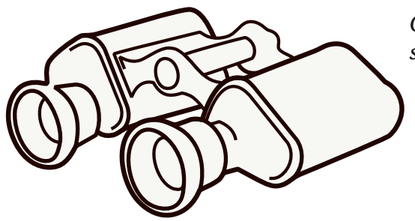
Colors



Colors are sourced from Antarctic imagery. Most expeditionary work took place during the summer, of necessity. The constant sunshine, ice and snow could be blinding. So I wanted to convey the tone through a predominance of paler colors in low contrast, rather than the horror trope of dark values.

Components

In a photography manual from one expedition, I noticed the illustrations were line drawings in a schematic style. This fits the game aesthetic: it's clear, authoritative, and austere. I chose to keep a minimum of texture and gradients for most components, except for some weathering—just enough to suggest a harsh environment.



Object in schematic style

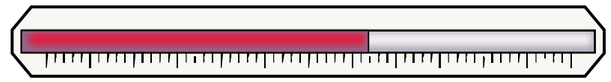
Popup elements, with frosted overlay at right





Hover/select overlays for buttons



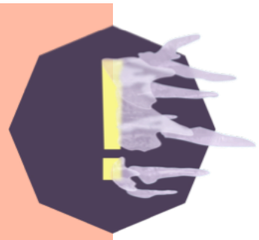


Compass and health/weather meter



Procreate brushes used for weathering effects on text and components

Bad component: lacks outlines, too much texture in ice, silhouette disrupted



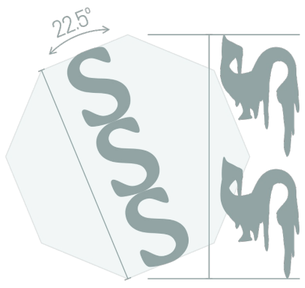
Logo

Hand sketches for the logo:



I considered various iconic elements for Earth's southern continent. After some tinkering I found the regular octagon a good symbol. It combines some crystalline qualities with eight points to suggest the cardinal and ordinal directions. By tilting it, I make the shape less stable (like conditions of exploration) and avoid our strong modern association with the stop sign.





The logotype and the octagonal mark can be used separately or in combination in these coloring treatments.

The divisions of the octagon can be exploited for other purposes, for example, filled with colors as showcased earlier in this document. The shape is repeated in other components like the compass.

