

# Project 3 – Objects and Narratives

Dungeon Relics-

An Interactive Exploration of  
Historical Instruments of Torture

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This image generated by Google Lab Ai

# Project Description

- Dungeon Relics is a part of interactive visual narrative project that reconstructs medieval torture devices as digital relics for reflection. By combining scientific analysis with historical critique, it explores how violence has been **mechanised** and how we may **interpret** such tools today.
- The aim of the project is **Evoking Resistance to Violence and Reflection on History**
- The project try to use a text adventure game form to enhance user experience. Mainly through **Unity** to design the scenes and use human voice to narrate.

# Motivation and objectives

- Why did I choose this theme?
  - My interest in this theme was sparked by an online image of historical torture devices from the Science Museum in London. I was both fascinated and unsettled by the brutal mechanical design behind these objects. This initial curiosity led me to visit the museum in person, where I explored the collection in greater depth. Later, I extended my research by visiting a museum in Berlin that also displayed a wide range of torture instruments, which further deepened my desire to critically interpret them through design.



# Motivation and objectives

- What do I want the audience to get?
  - I hope the audience can reflect on how far legal systems and human rights have evolved over time. By interacting with these historically violent instruments, viewers are encouraged to question the intersection of science, power, and morality. The project is not meant to sensationalize pain, but to offer a critical space where viewers consider how mechanical innovation was once used to enforce control and punish the body and how these things had been baned.



Wooden chair with 12 steel blades,  
China, 1701-1900  
1701-1900



Thumbscrew, France, 1601-1850  
1601-1850



Iron Torture Gibbet  
1501-1800

# Museum Collection Research



**Thumbscrew, France, 1601-1850**

## Reason for Selection:

The ingenious spiral structure embodies the principle of mechanical pressure and is one of the most 'engineered' instruments of torture.

It is designed not to kill but to **maximize pain**, and thus represents a deep bond between technology and violence.



**Model Iron maiden,  
"Virgin of Nuremburg"**

## Reason for Selection:

Although it may be a later model, it has become one of the 'symbols of medieval torture' and is highly visual and symbolic.

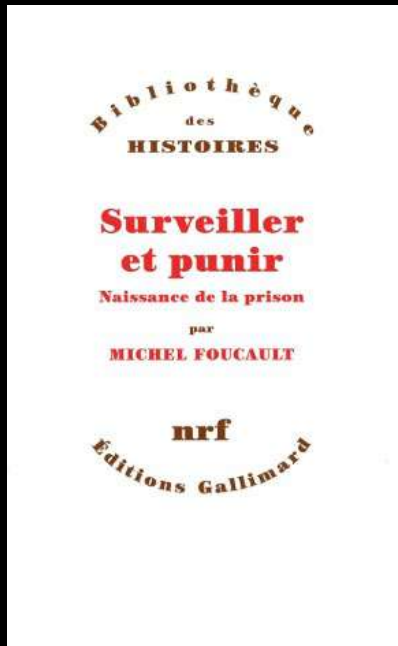
The contrast between its visual and functionality is striking, as it is disguised as the Madonna on the outside, but contains hidden thorns on the inside.

As a symbolic device, it provokes reflection on moral pretense and institutional violence.

These objects are not just relics of the past – they are machines that reflect the darker applications of scientific thinking.

# Ethical and Reflective Issues

- The central question: is technology neutral?



*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

“When science meets power, even pain can be engineered.”

“The body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.”

“Punishment, then, did not vanish; it changed its form.”

“The public execution is to be understood not only as a judicial but also as a political ritual.”

# Narrative and Character Path Design



Getting Started screen



Discovery of  
torture devices



Historical narrative

Understanding  
its structure



Make a choice



**The  
Breaking  
Wheel**

Video Play

**"In the presence of these cold instruments of torture and shadowy relics, we see not only the cruelty of history, but also the struggle of civilisation. They remind us that power, fear and punishment once dominated human society. Today, in the face of these witnesses to the past, we should think even more about how to protect our dignity and avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. History is never just the past; it is always relevant to our future."**

Emotional  
impact

Concluding remarks

Understanding  
its structure

# Interface and visual sketches

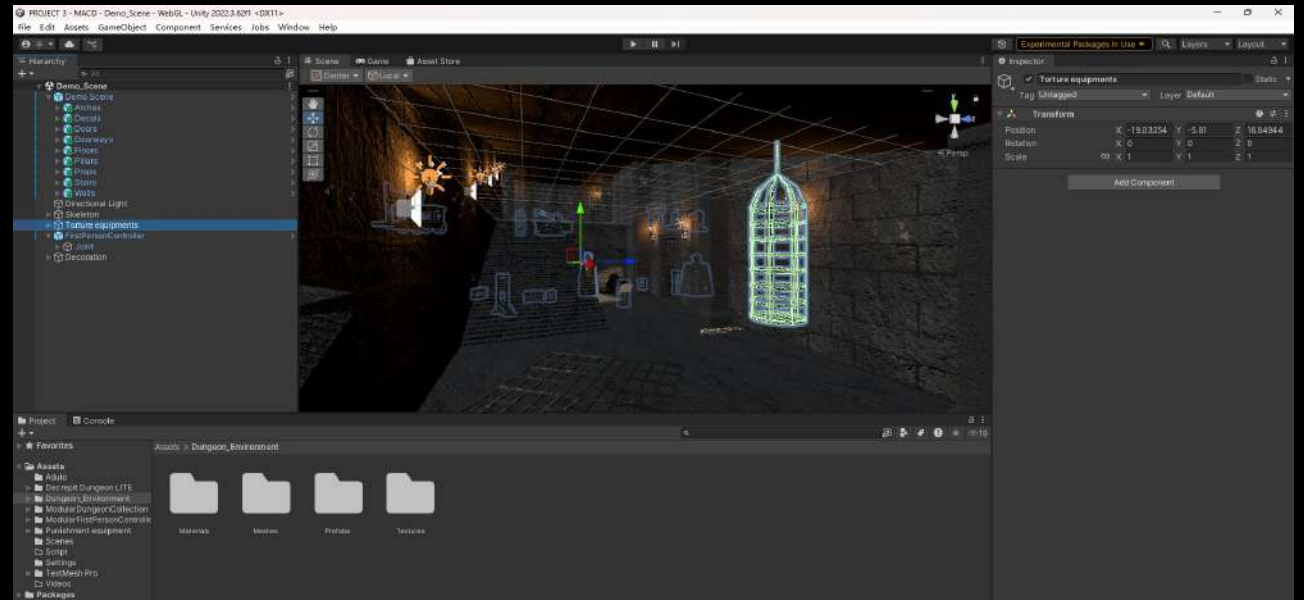
- Interactive visual style reference:



<https://dianedesign.itch.io/visual-novel-spell-duel>

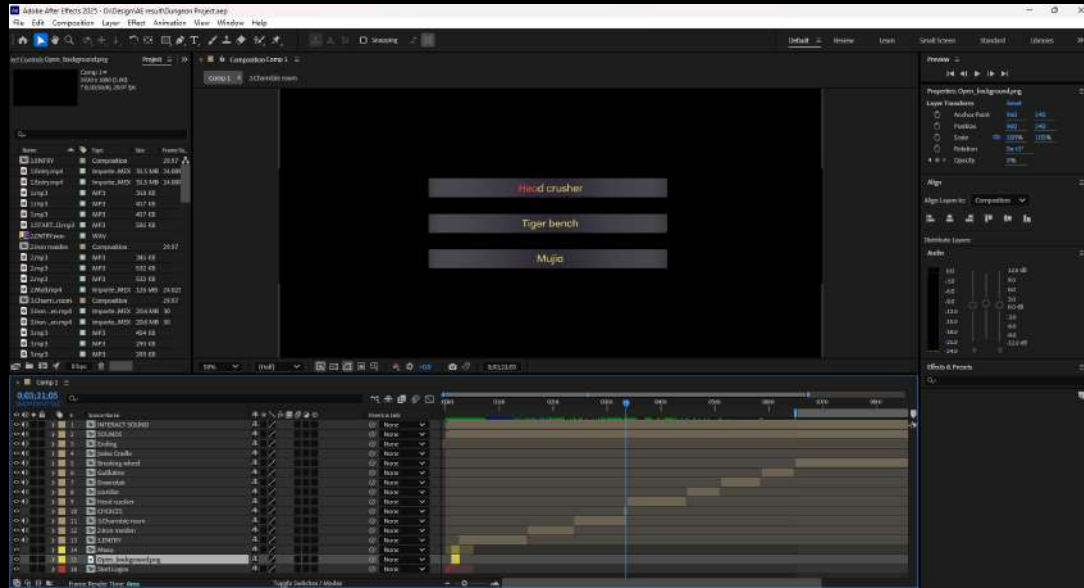
Through Unity  
First person control, Scene rendering, Object display had been achieved.

Because this project basically rely on Unity environment, So, it is important to find out some suitable sources like **scenario** and **Objects** to support it.

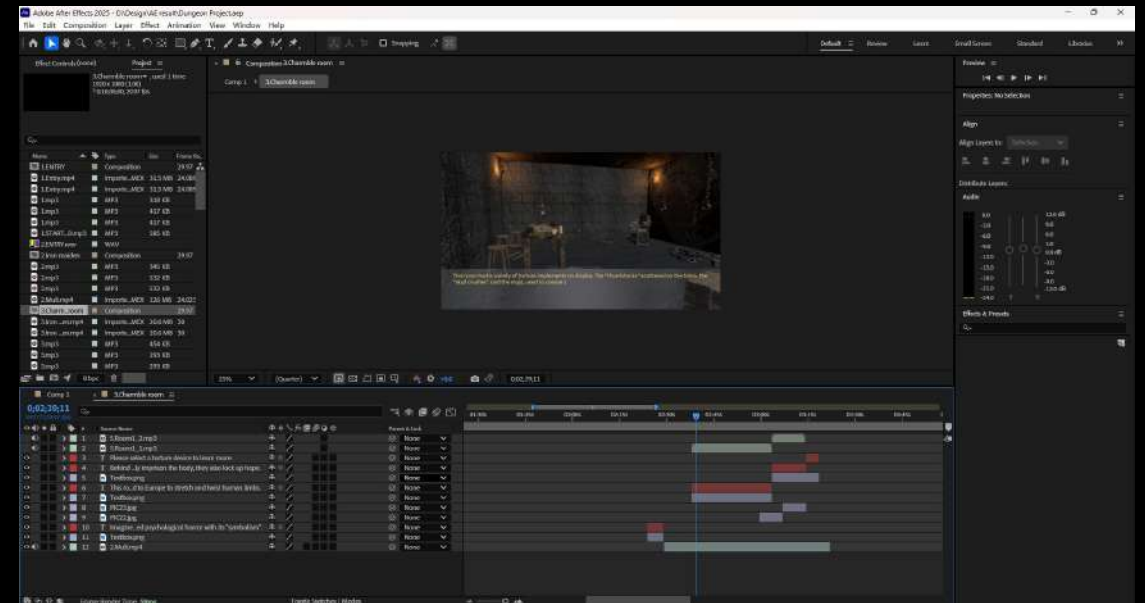


Those objects can be seen via blue line

# Interface and visual sketches

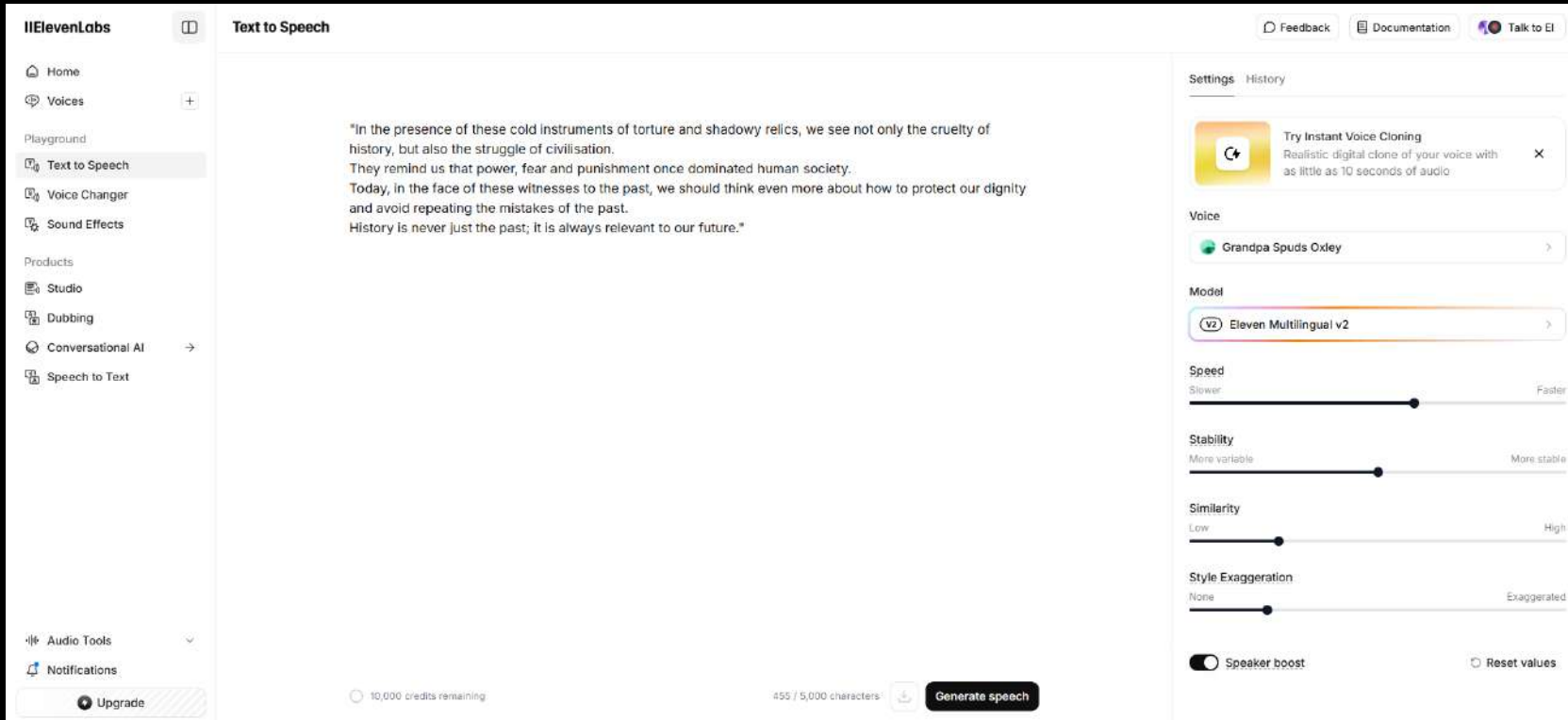


Using AE to achieve, open screen, subtitle creation, image display, video playback, option selection and motion effects, text display.



Use AE  
To achieve Final result.

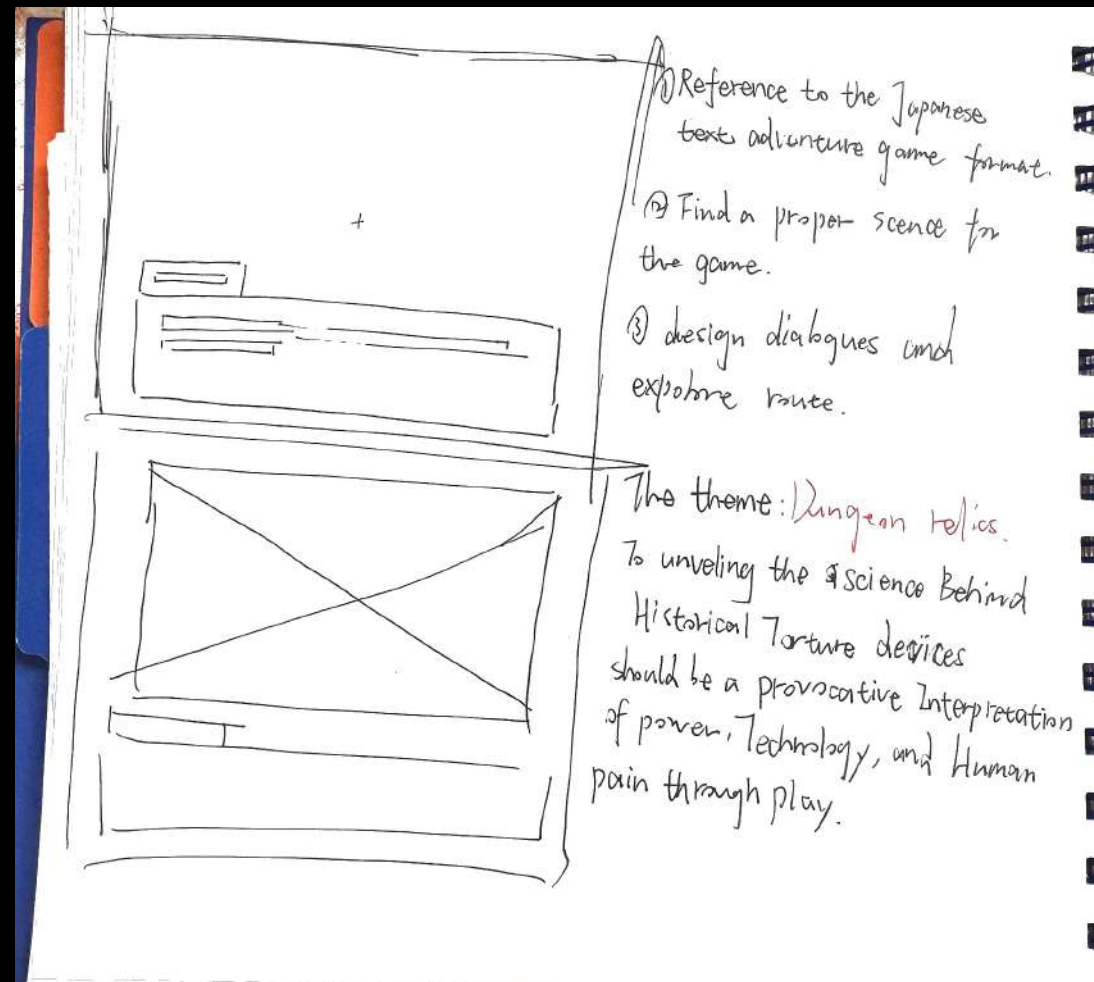
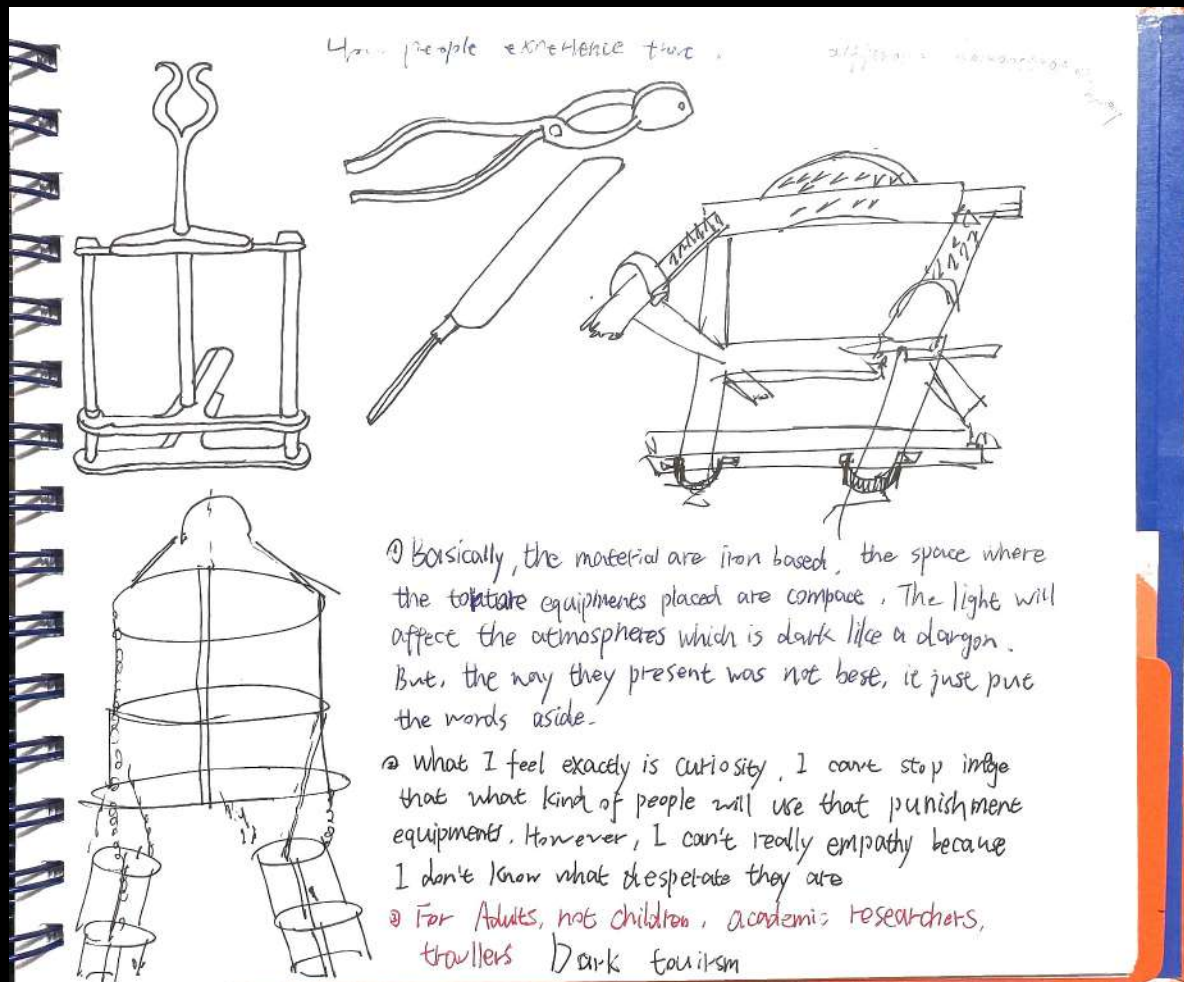
# Voice and Tone of Text



The voice mainly use Ai tool to generate.

In this case, I use the elderly voice because it give people a feeling of professional.

# Sketch Book

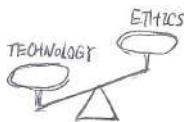


## Project 3 planning

Why people design torture equipments like that?



intimidate, deter, threaten.  
What is the function behind the form?  
punishment, Maintaining social order.

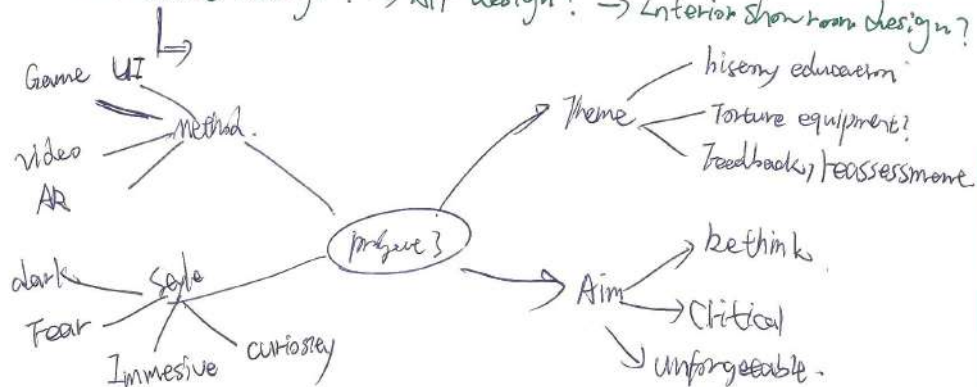


Aim → Rethinks How to display these hidden or rarely objects → critical

Audience → (18+), or have accompanied by parents.

Challenge → Reveal hidden human history → Dark age How?

↳ Game design? → App design? → Interior show room design?



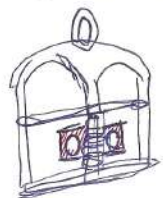
## Plan.

Theme: Rungern Kelics Instruments of Torture.  
An Interactive Exploration of History

- ① a free space that user can explore.
- ② different torture devices user can interact with.
- ③ text advantage games form.
- ④ voice enhance.
- ⑤ text and voice can tell user the story.
- ⑥ choice system.
- ⑦ unique UI system.
- ⑧ Unity platform. → resources.

## Collections.

① Thumbscrew, France, 16th-18th.



② Iron Torture Gibbet.



③ Iron maiden, "Virgin of Nuremberg"



④ etc.

## HMW.

① How might museums surface the less-known aspects of their collections?

By turning obscure torture tools into interactive experience, museums can provoke new questions about science, power, and morality.

② How might the collection be interacted with to encourage exploration and discovery? By transforming torture devices into playable digital artifacts, users can uncover their hidden mechanics and historical meanings through active engagement.

③ How might ~~the~~ museums present their collection in different contexts?

By reimaging historical objects through a narrative adventure, allow game culture merges with digital habits.

## User groups.

① Young people <sup>16</sup> (16-35)

background: junior high school, university student.  
knowing videos, games, social medias.

interest: history, suspense, humanistic reflections, game narratives, new museum experiences.

② people over 35.

users like discover the message inside the game or narrative form.

## User personas.

Alex, 19, learn history

Background: Interested in medieval history and the inquisition system.

Motivation: Want to see the connection between punishment and social power in the past.

Reaction: Attracted to the mechanics of the device, but feel uncomfortable with its brutality.

Objective: To be inspired to write an essay on technology and violence.



Name: Jessie (23 years old, design student)



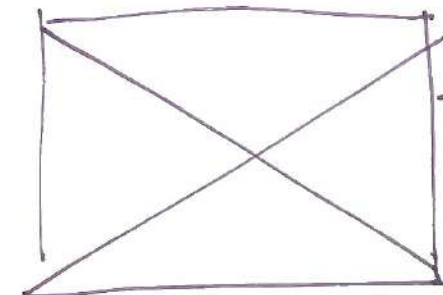
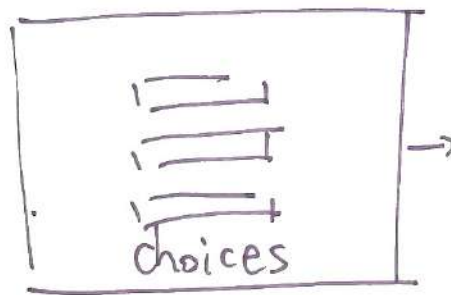
Background: Frequently go to museum, enjoys interactive media and critical design.

Motivation: Concerned with the tension between the aesthetics of violence, the objectification of the human body and the ethics design.

Response: Attracted by the stylised narrative the project, sensitive to tone & style.

Objective: See such projects as a source of design reflection and inspiration

UI



unity interface.

user can view all the  
space  
↓  
no limits.

# Feedback

- 1. Sketchbook is thin
  - I added more literature research, visual sketches, original inspirations, reference images, and experimental screenshots of the project development process to enrich the content of the sketchbook and make it more reflective of the depth of the research and the creative process of deduction.
- 2. Tittle is not clear
  - Change it to Dungeon Relics-An Interactive Exploration of Historical Instruments of Torture
- 3. The position of project is not clear
  - Displaying historical torture instruments as digital interactive objects is a rethinking of historical violence, power viewing, and ethical boundaries

# Feedback

- 4. No clear starting point for the 'journey'
  - I would introduce an 'audience journey' design, with a clear storytelling guide on the homepage (e.g. 'You walk into a forgotten dungeon .....') and guide the user to interactively 'Step-by-step' exploration of the different torture devices, rather than a flat historical information.
- 5. It is unclear which collection and object(s) from the Science Museum you are using and what the research focus is.
  - Although I have borrowed 'digital collections from science museums' as inspiration, I will further specify the specific collection, link to the source, or make it clear that if it is a fictionalised archaeological scene, it should also be stated that it is 'based on a conception of a historical fact' to avoid confusion.
- 6. The voice used to narrate these horrible events is quite cheerful.
  - This is the part that I'm not fully dealing with at the moment. I plan to re-record the narration in a more contextual tone, or move to a calm, neutral textual narrative to reinforce the seriousness of the content and reduce discomfort.

# Feedback

- 7. Are the quotes yours?
  - If text not original to me is currently used in a video or page, I will attribute it in its entirety; I will also use inverted commas or footnotes to clearly differentiate between my own narrative and the quoted content.
- 8. The timing of the text moves quickly and is difficult to read in some cases.
  - I'll redesign the timeline and adjust the pacing of the credits.
- 9. Who is your audience?
  - My target audience is college students or adults interested in digital narratives in history and museums, and I will more clearly label the page 'This project contains sensitive images and is recommended for ages 16+' to set expectations and moderate warnings.

# Feedback

- 10. Some of the content is quite gruesome... should be appropriate for the audience.
  - If text not original to me is currently used in a video or page, I will attribute it in its entirety; I will also use inverted commas or footnotes to clearly differentiate between my own narrative and the quoted content.
- 11. Some of the content is quite gruesome... should be appropriate for the audience.
  - I will be filtering and grading the content for presentation, such as adding anchors to allow users to skip parts of the content as well as providing historical contextual notes rather than visually stimulating oriented presentation methods to respect the audience's acceptance.

# Conclusion and future directions

- What did I learn from this project?
  - I realized that technology is not always neutral – in history, it has been precisely engineered to inflict pain and control the body.
  - Through visualizing violence, I learned to balance narrative tension with ethical restraint.  
Transforming historical torture devices into digital interaction was not just a technical task, but a reflection on power, spectatorship, and moral boundaries.
  - This project changed how I see museum artefacts – not just as historical objects, but as living political legacies.

# Conclusion and future directions

- What's next?
  - Museum Display Expansion: I would like to develop this project into a suite of digitally immersive exhibition content that provides the audience with an interactive and reflective form of experience, coupled with audio guides and background information.
  - Video Game Orientation: Explore the project as a prototype for a 'serious game' that incorporates more narrative branches and player choices to make gaming not just entertainment, but a form of ethical engagement.