

THINGS TYPICAL IN TOMB RAIDER

BY SPONGE

THIS LITTLE SURVEY IS AIMED TO POINT OUT SOME REOCCURRING PHENOMENA IN TOMB RAIDER LEVEL DESIGN. IT IS REMARKABLE HOW SOME ELEMENTS KEEP COMING UP BOTH IN THE ORIGINAL GAMES AS WELL AS IN CUSTOM LEVELS. I THOUGHT SOME PEOPLE MIGHT FIND THAT INTERESTING. SO HERE'S A SELECTION OF THINGS THAT STRIKE ME AS TYPICAL DEVICES IN CLASSIC TOMB RAIDER GAME DESIGN.

ITEM PLACEMENT



THE PLACEMET OF COLLECTIBLE ITEMS DEPENDS ON THE SETTING OF A LEVEL TO SOME DEGREE. HOWEVER, I NOTICED THAT ITEMS, ESPECIALLY PUZZLE ITEMS, ARE OFTEN DELIBERATELY PUT ON DISPLAY IN A SPECIAL NICHE, OR EVEN THEIR OWN LITTLE ROOM, OR SHRINE, IF YOU WILL. THIS MAKES THEM SEEM VERY SPECIAL.



SHOWCASING



THERE'S A TECHNIQUE USED AS EARLY AS TR1 THAT I REFER TO AS SHOWCASING. SOMETIMES AN ITEM IS SHOWN EARLY ON THROUGH A KIND OF PEEP HOLE. YOU KNOW LARA WILL NEED IT LATER ON BUT SHE HAS TO WORK A BIT TO GET IT. THIS SPECIAL MODE OF ITEM PLACEMENT CREATES AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE TASKS THAT NEED TO BE DONE TO GET IT. IT ALSO HELPS TO CREATE SOME SUSPENSE.

SECRET DOORS



ANOTHER TRADITIONAL PHENOMENON IN THE TOMB RAIDER GAMES IS DOORS THAT ARE VERY HARD TO DETECT. THERE ARE INSTANCES THROUGHOUT TR1-3 WHEN A CAMERA WILL SHOW YOU A WALL OR A BOOKCASE THAT SUDDENLY OPENS INTO ANOTHER ROOM OR HALLWAY. IT CREATE AN AHA-REACTION IN A PLAYER.

LONG LADDERS



ESPECIALLY TOMB RAIDER II FEATURED SOME VERY LONG LADDERS, GENERALLY USED IN COMBINATION WITH A PARTICULAR AUDIO FILE (NO. 6 IN THE TRII SOUNDTRACK), THE LONG-WAY-UP JINGLE, AS IT IS CALLED. WHENEVER LARA HAS TO MOVE UP TO (MUCH) HIGHER ALTITUDES, THIS COMBINATION OF MOVEMENT AND MUSIC CAN CREATE A CERTAIN ATMOSPHERE TO GO WITH IT.



MASSIVE MASSES



SOMETHING ELSE ADDING TO THE CLIMBING EXPERIENCES IN TOMB RAIDER GAMES ARE SHEER MASSES OF MATERIAL. BE IT MAGMA MOUNDS THAT LARA MUST AVOID, OR A MOUNTAIN OF HEAVY ROCKS AND DEBRIS SHE HAS TO MOVE, OR AVALANCHES OF SAND AND MUD SHE NEEDS TO MAKE HER WAY AROUND. THESE MASSES ARE A NICE MEANS TO MAKE WAYS IN ALTITUDE A BIT MORE CHALLENGING, AND THEY ARE MOSTLY EASY TO TEXTURISE, TOO!

COLOSSAL STATUES



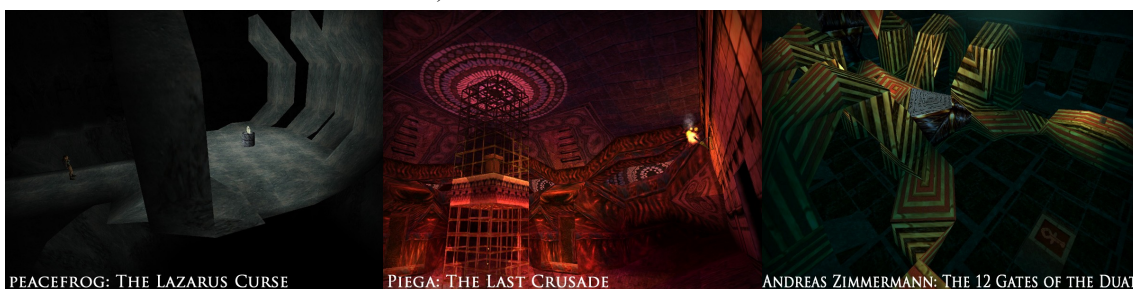
SOMETHING THAT'S MADE FREQUENT AND NUMEROUS APPEARANCES IN ALL CLASSIC TR GAMES ARE COLOSSAL MONUMENTS AS A PART OF THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN. THE CREATORS OF THE ORIGINAL GAMES HAVE CREATED SEVERAL SPHYNXES, FOR INSTANCE.



SOMETIMES STATUES DON'T JUST SERVE DECORATIVE PURPOSES, HOWEVER, BUT ARE ACTUALLY INCLUDED IN THE GAMEPLAY. LARA HAD TO CLIMB THE GIANT BUDDHA STATUE IN TRII TO GET TO A RECEPTACLE, FOR EXAMPLE, AND A NICHE IN THE BACK OF THE STATUE WAS USED TO HIDE [SPOILER ALERT!] A GOLDEN DRAGON.



SINCE THE DEGREE OF DETAIL YOU CAN INCLUDE WHEN BUILDING WITH TRLE ARCHITECTURE ALONE IS FAIRLY LIMITED, LEVEL DESIGNERS HAVE OFTEN ONLY BUILT PARTS OR USED STATIC OBJECTS TO ACCENTUATE FACES AND FURTHER DETAIL.



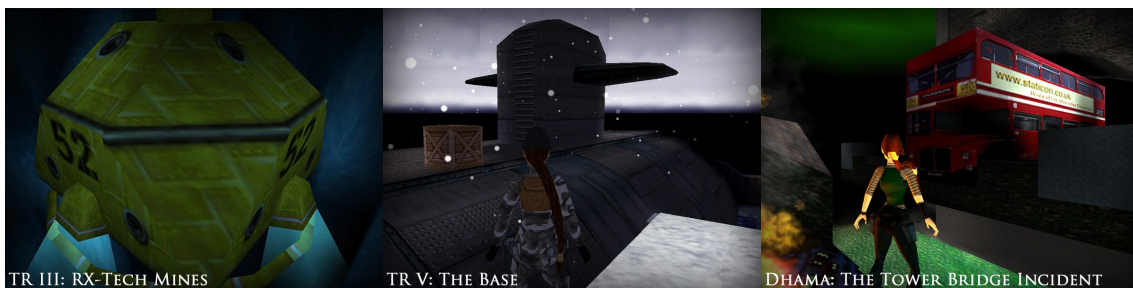
CLIMBABLE VEHICLES



ANOTHER TYPE OF MASSIVE STRUCTURAL DESIGN, AND SOMEWHAT OF A MODERN COUNTERPART TO THE CLIMBABLE STATUES, ARE CLIMBABLE AND MASSIVE VEHICLES.



SEVERAL MEANS OF LAND, RAIL, SEA AND AIR TRANSPORT HAVE MADE APPEARANCES IN THE ORIGINAL TR GAMES. THE CLASSIC GAMES INVOLVED AN AIRPLANE, A SEAPLANE, BOATS AND SHIPS, A SUBMARINE, A UFO, A CARGO TRAIN, A LONDON UNDERGROUND TRAIN, AND SEVERAL MORE.



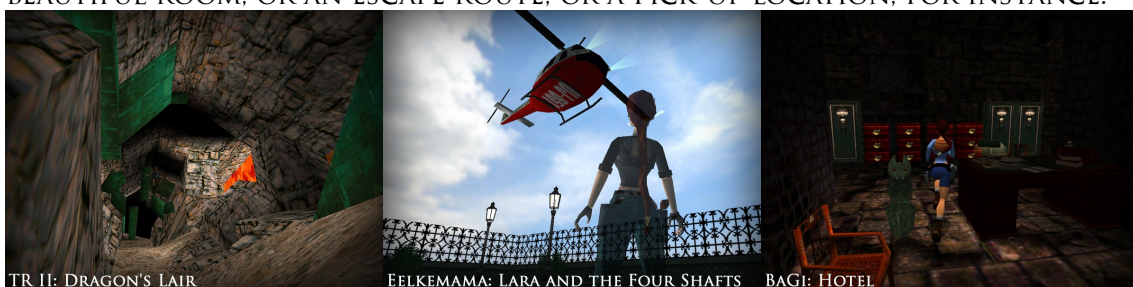
NOTWITHSTANDING, THE VARIETY OF MASSIVE VEHICLES HAS BEEN EXTENDED EVEN FURTHER BY THE TOMB RAIDER CUSTOM LEVEL COMMUNITY.



RAIDING OFF INTO THE SUNSET



THIS IS THE TOMB RAIDER EQUIVALENT TO RIDING OFF INTO THE SUNSET. IT JUST MEANS MAKING THE END ROOM A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE, SUCH AS A BREATHTAKING, BEAUTIFUL ROOM, OR AN ESCAPE ROUTE, OR A PICK-UP LOCATION, FOR INSTANCE.





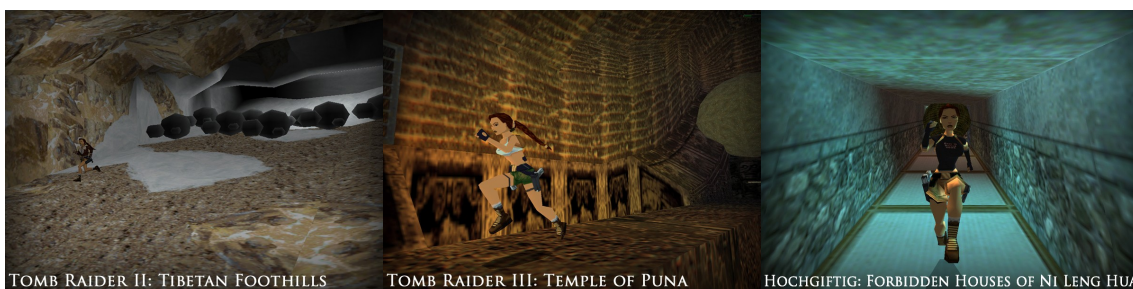
IT DOES NOT TAKE MUCH TO CUSTOMISE A TEXTURE AND RAISE THE ESTHETIC QUALITY OF A TOMB RAIDER CUSTOM LEVEL. EVEN IF TEXTURES DIFFER JUST A BIT FROM THEIR PROTOTYPE, THEY CAN BE USED AS A HINT OF SOME SORT. THE SAME GOES FOR OBJECTS THAT ARE SLIGHTLY CHANGED IN TINT OR TEXTURE.



ENTIRELY NEW TEXTURES AND OBJECTS, EVEN IF SMALL IN NUMBERS, ON THE OTHER HAND, DO NOT JUST OPEN UP NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR DECORATION AND GAMEPLAY, BUT CAN ALSO HELP MAKE A LEVEL EVEN MORE MEMORABLE.



TYPICAL LARA ...



THANKS FOR READING! A LOT MORE COULD HAVE BEEN SHOWN HERE. THIS IS JUST A SMALL COLLECTION OF WHAT I NOTICED WHEN PLAYING TOMB RAIDER. I HOPE YOU COULD TAKE SOMETHING OUT OF THIS OVERVIEW. MAYBE I WAS ABLE INSPIRE AN IDEA YOU CAN APPLY TO A LEVEL YOU ARE BUILDING, OR BRING SOME AWARENESS OF REOCCURRING ELEMENTS TO YOU THAT WILL HELP YOU SPOT MORE OF THEM WHEN YOU'RE PLAYING A GAME.

CHEERS,
SPONGE
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