

Sigils into Spaces

Community Mapping in DOOM as an Expression of the Weird in Video Game Horror

Introduction (3 minutes)

Level Design and Doom Mapping

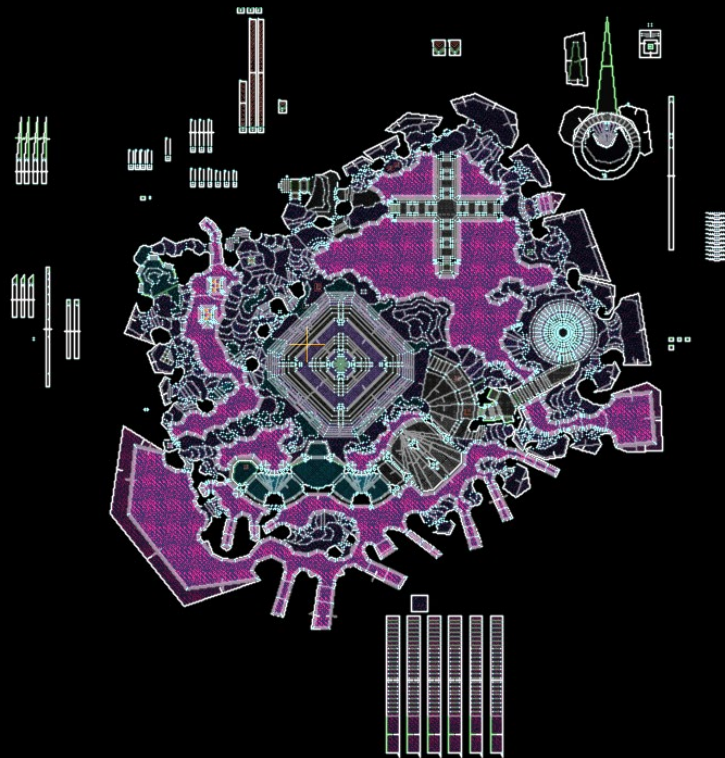
“Level design is the practice of planning and building spaces for video games” (*The Level Design Book*)

- Level design for many contemporary engines emphasises creative use of modularity for fidelity and content pipeline efficiency.
- Doom mapping processes differ significantly from this practice by nature of the engine and editor, even in cases where authors aim to represent real spaces or emulate the look of modern AAA
- “The beauty of Doom: everything is abstract, you can loosely convey the the idea of locations and that is more than enough for the player.” - Dragonfly

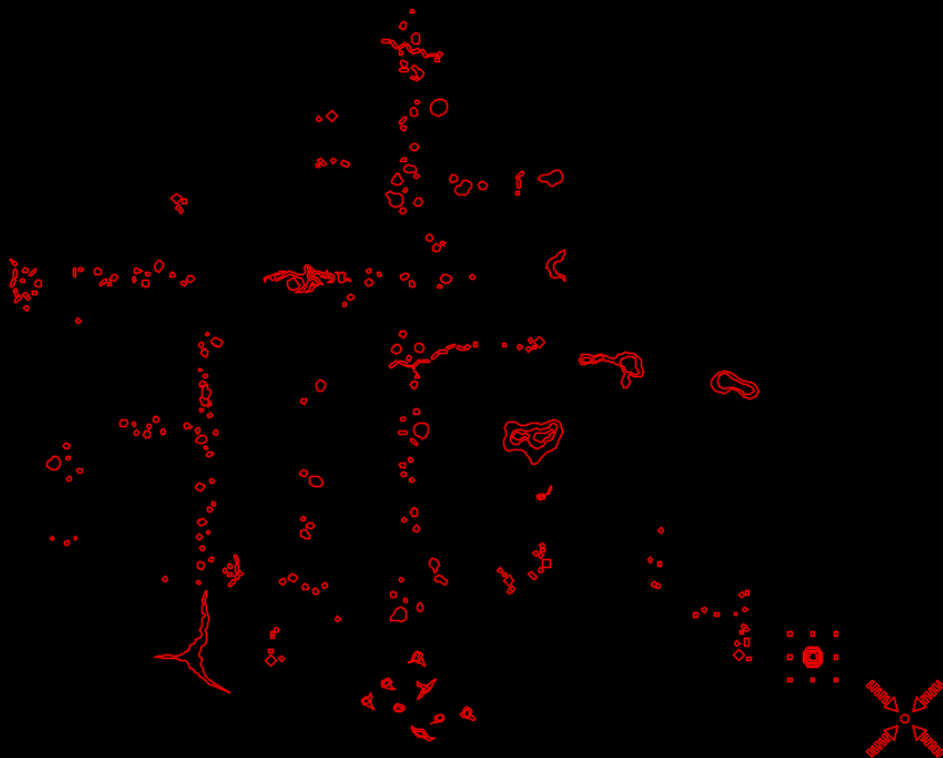


Drawing spaceBroom editors

- Doom is a 2.5D game engine. Mappers draw spaces top-down, extruding floor and ceiling height to sculpt elaborate spaces.
- *Linedefs* and *sectors* are textured by the mapper and can have scripts attached to them to trigger movement, ambushes or other effects during gameplay.
- Players experience the maps primarily in first person but can tap a key to view the 2D plan of the space in the *automap*.

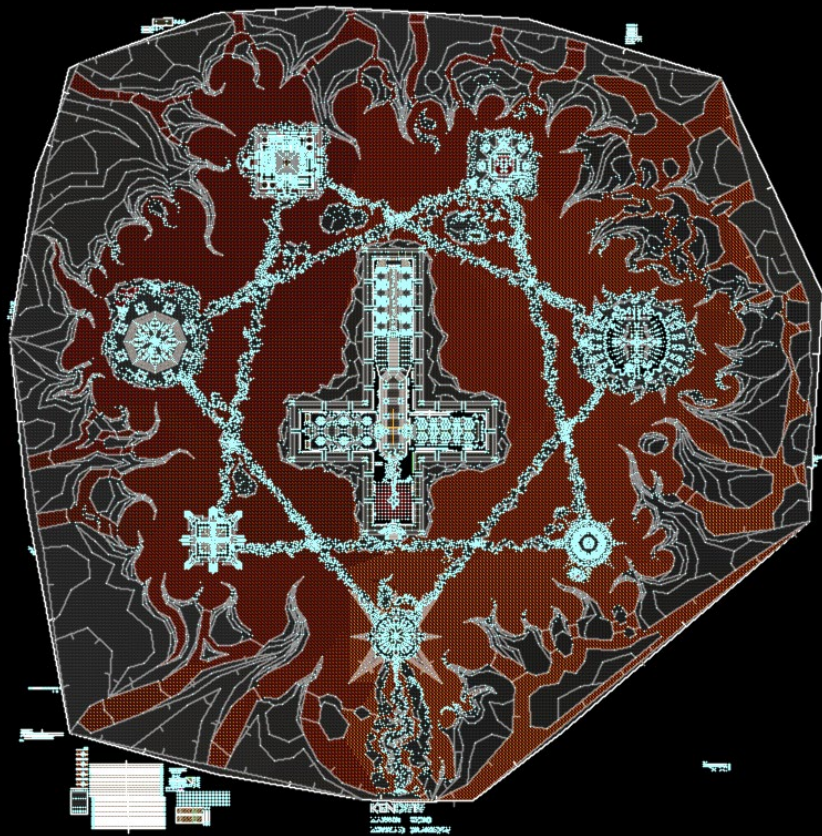


Ancient Aliens Map18: Illuminati Revealed by Paul DeBruyne (skillsaw), viewed in the doombuilder editor.



- The *automap* updates during play to show all spaces that the player has been able to see any part of. Mappers have significant artistic control over the automap
- In *Gossip*, Touchdown shows the player the entire map from the start, but representation is abstract and glyph-like

Gossip Map01: 97% Corrupted by Bartek Karoliński (Touchdown) - automap view



KENOSIS

MAPPER: UKIRO

MUSICIAN: DRAGONFLY

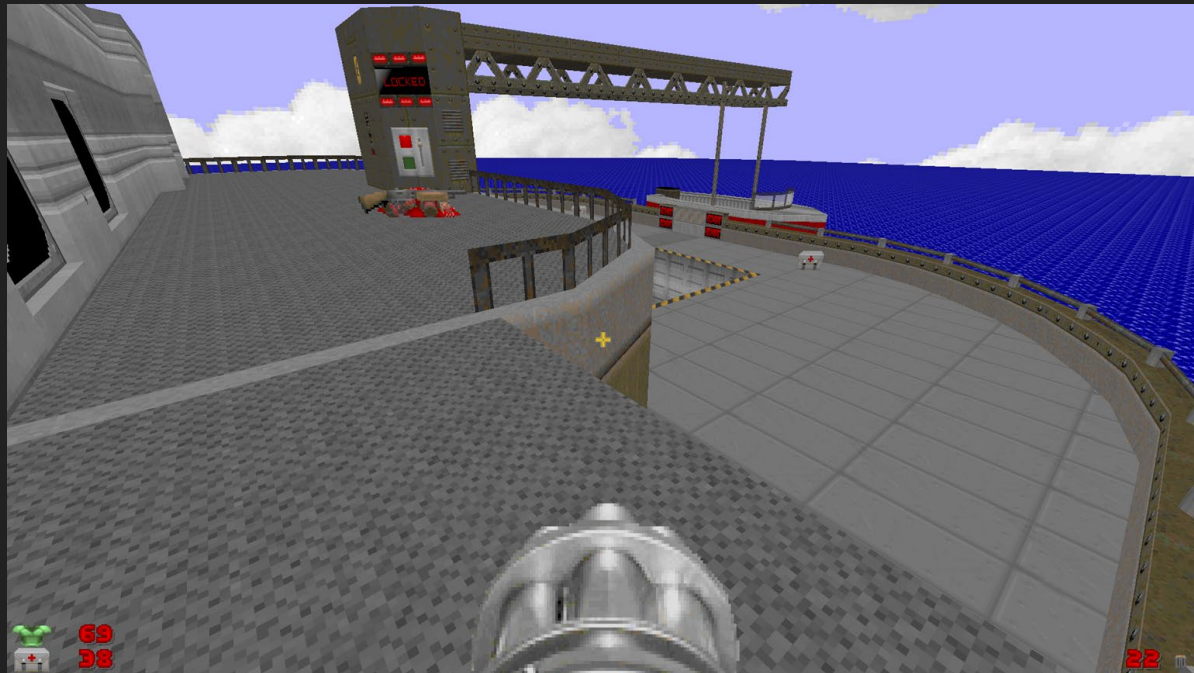


- Map WAD files may contain drawn elements that the player will never see, like author signatures.
- Large scale representational or geometric structures like this heptagram may become visible to the player on their automap as they explore the space.

Eveternity II Map36: Kenosis by Ola Björling (ukiro)



Abandon Map09: Celestial Petrichor by Scotty



Representational spaces drawn in DOOM:

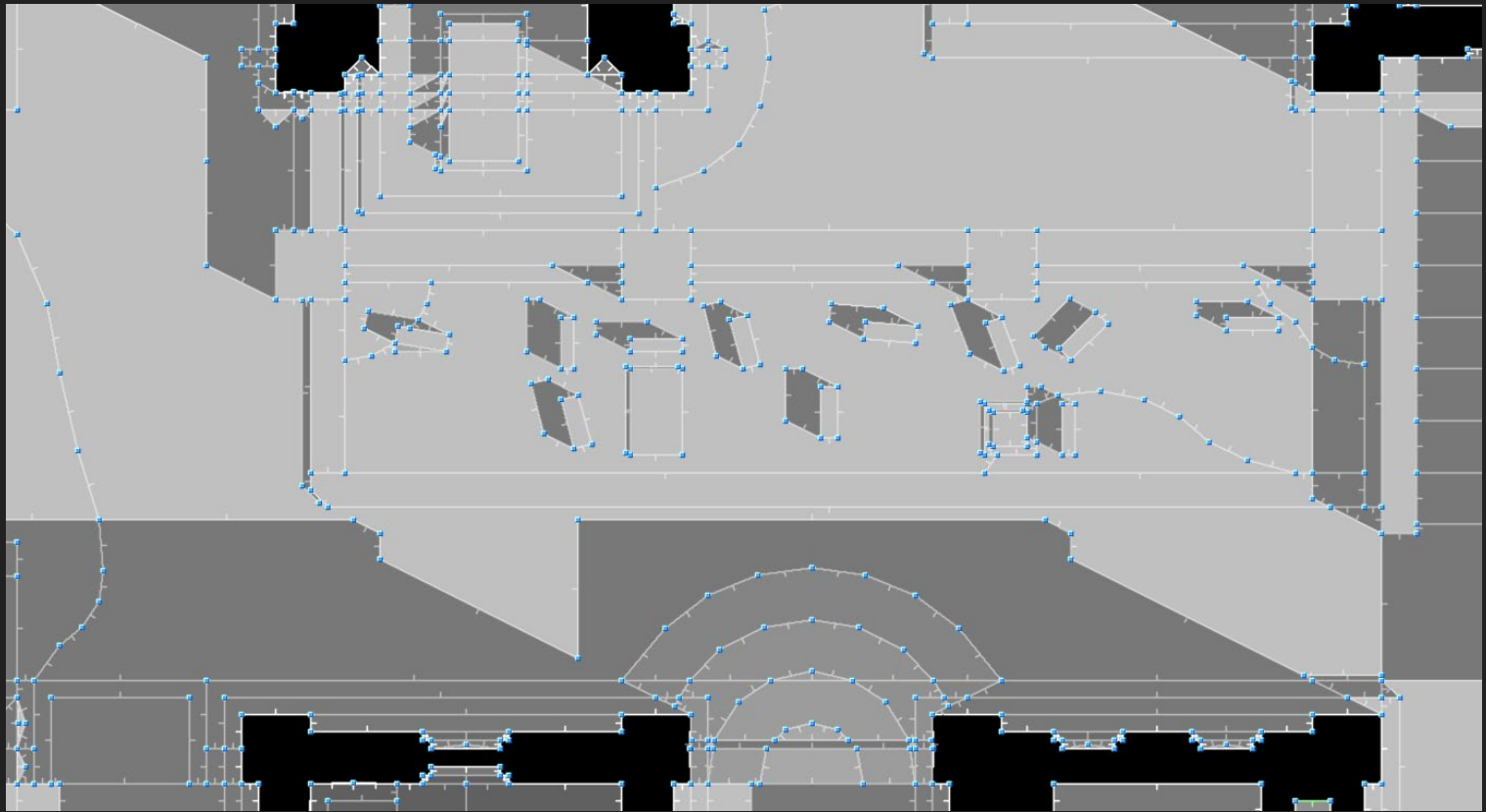
Overboard Map01: Cruis'n UAC by Cyriak Harris (Mouldy)

00.44.0

Myhouse Map01: My House by Veddge - automap view

MAP01: MY HOUSE

50 96% 2 3 4 77% BULL 200 / 200
 AMMO HEALTH ARMS RKT 50 / 50
 CSB 0 / 50



Moonlight hand-drawn onto the architecture of the necropolis.

Dimension of the Boomed Map04: Necropolis by Stephen Wadsworth (Urthar)

Sector drawing to create moonlight:

Dimension of the Boomed Map04: Necropolis by Stephen Wadsworth (Urthar)

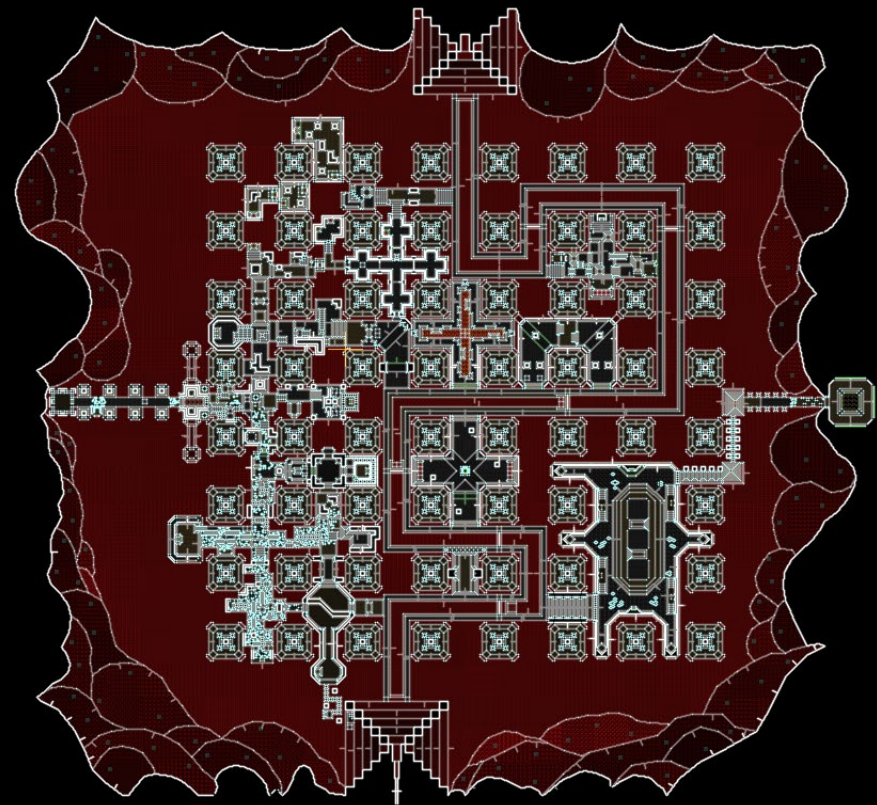


50 AMMO	100% HEALTH	2 ARMS		0% ARMOR	BULL 50 SHEL 0 RCKT 0 CELL 0	300 50 50 200
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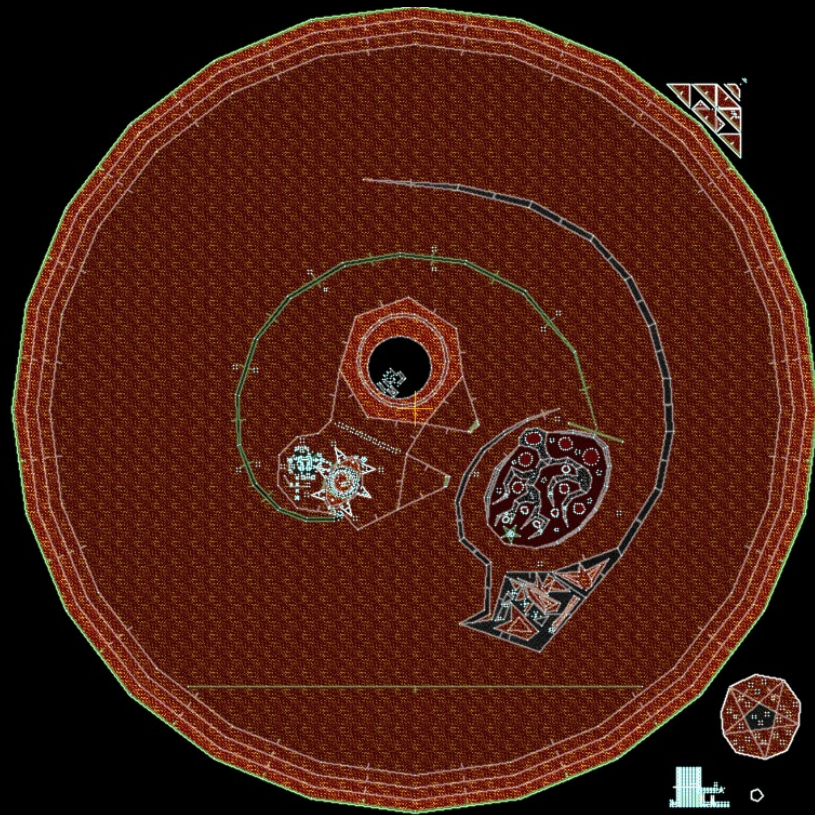
Sector drawing to create moonlight:
Dimension of the Boomed Map04: Necropolis by Stephen Wadsworth (Urthar)



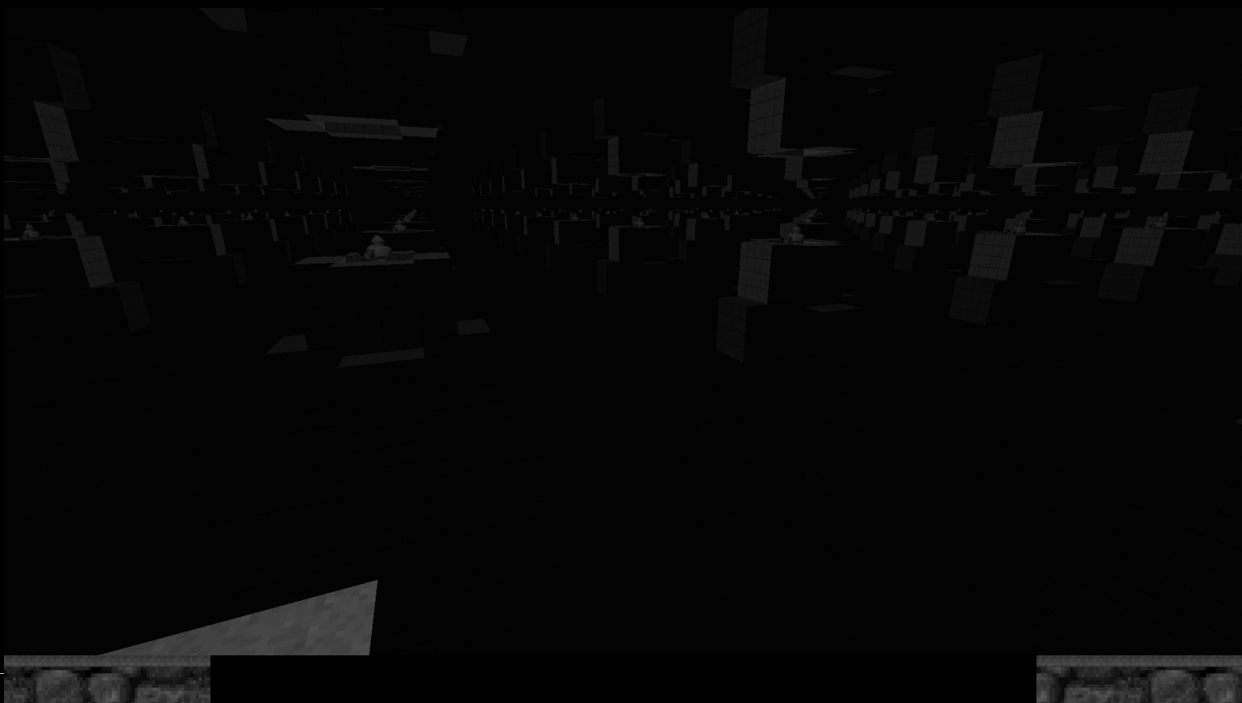
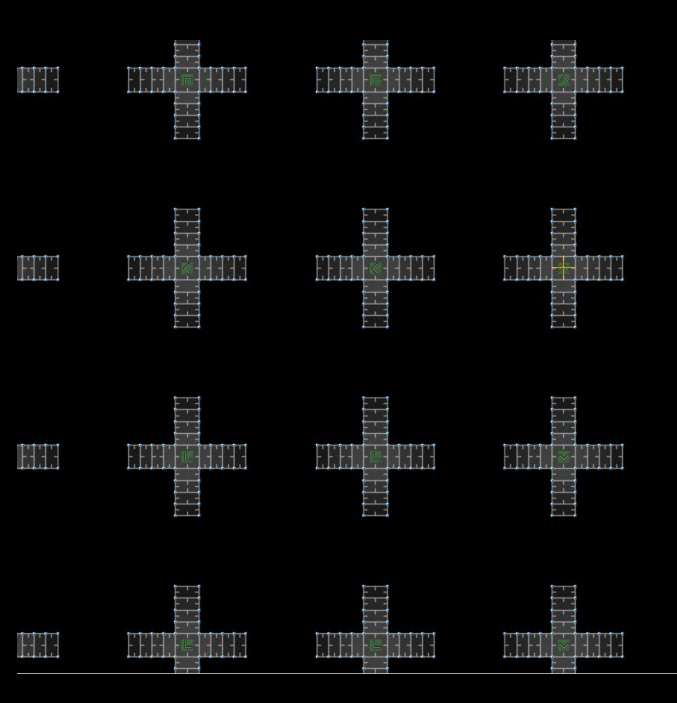
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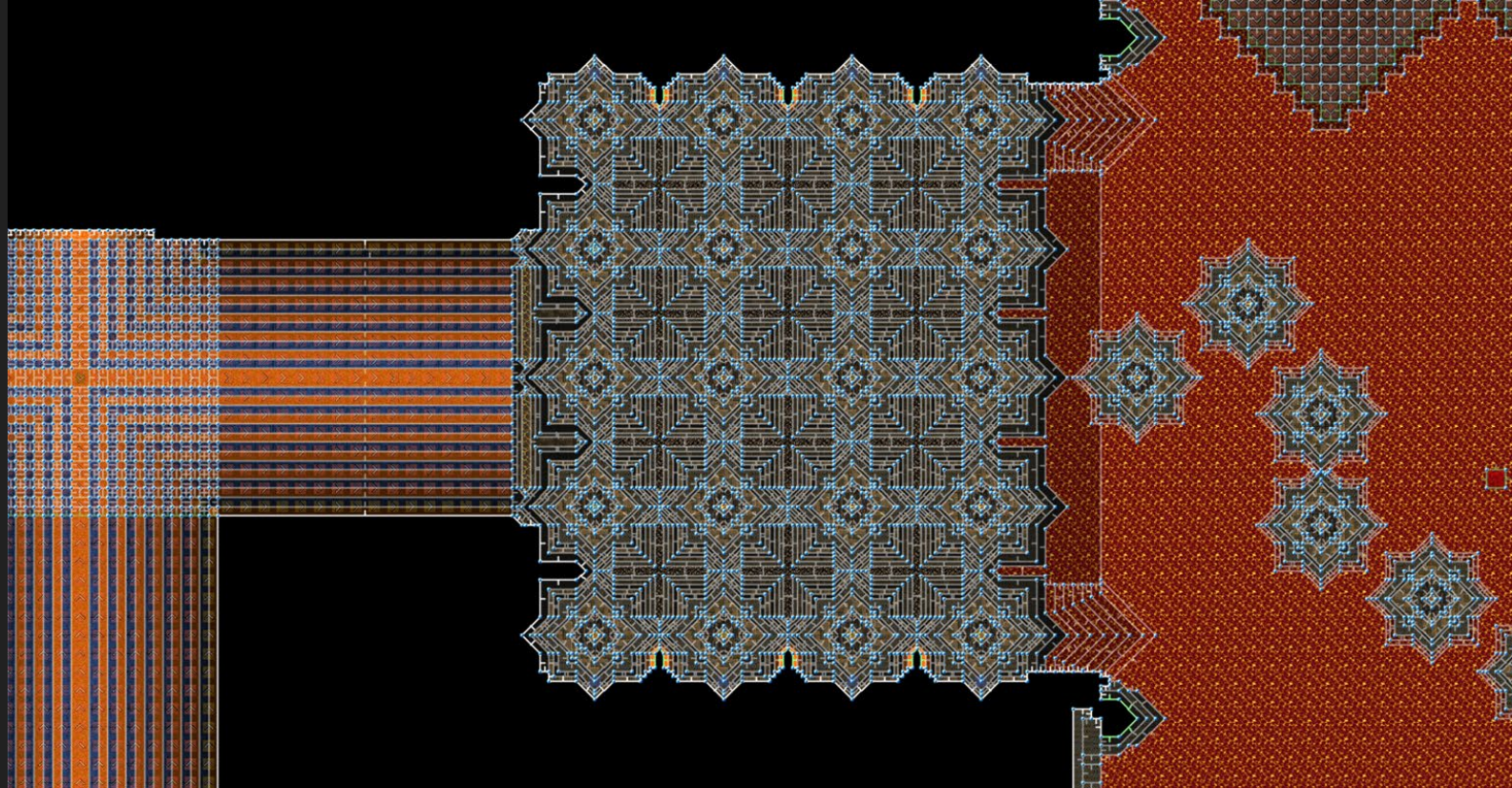
Sunder Map09: The Cage by Insane_Gazebo



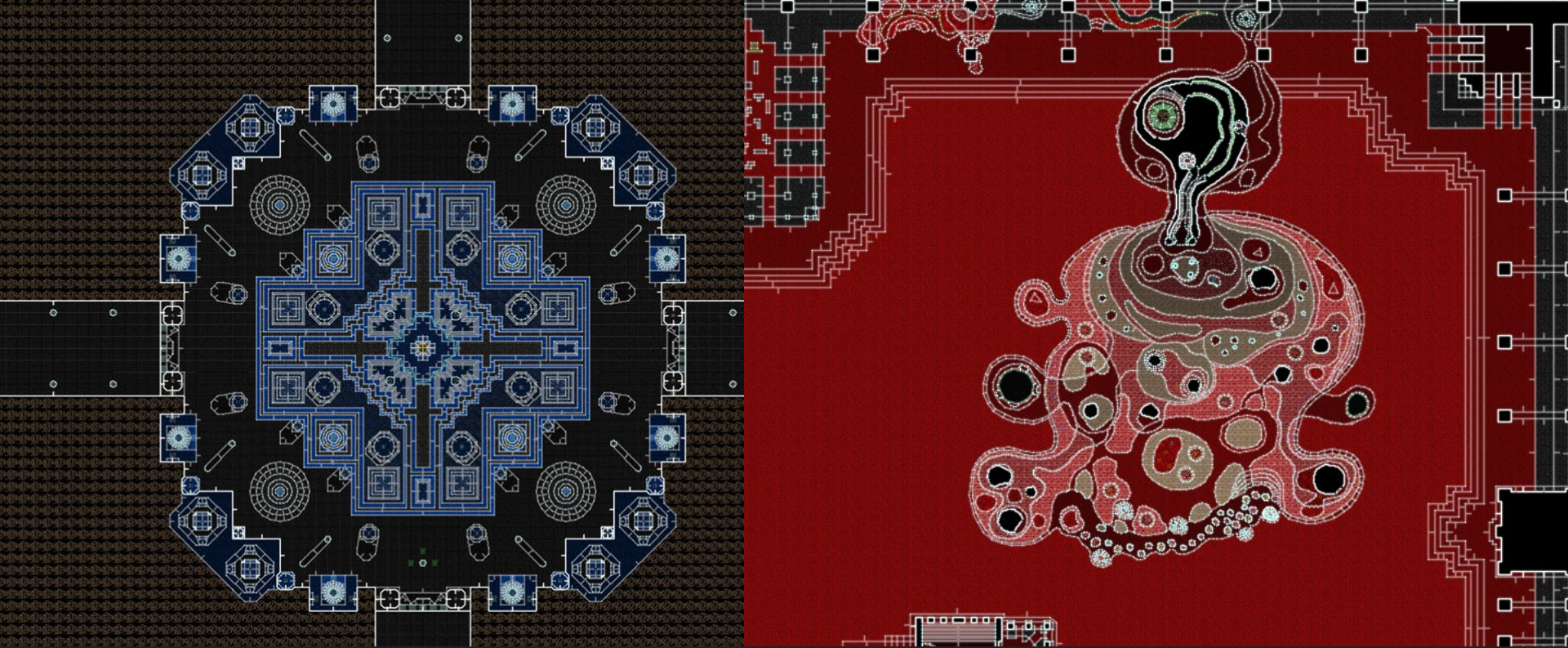
The Egg of Human Endeavors Map01 by Benjogami



Imnothere anymore Map02: --- by signatureverie



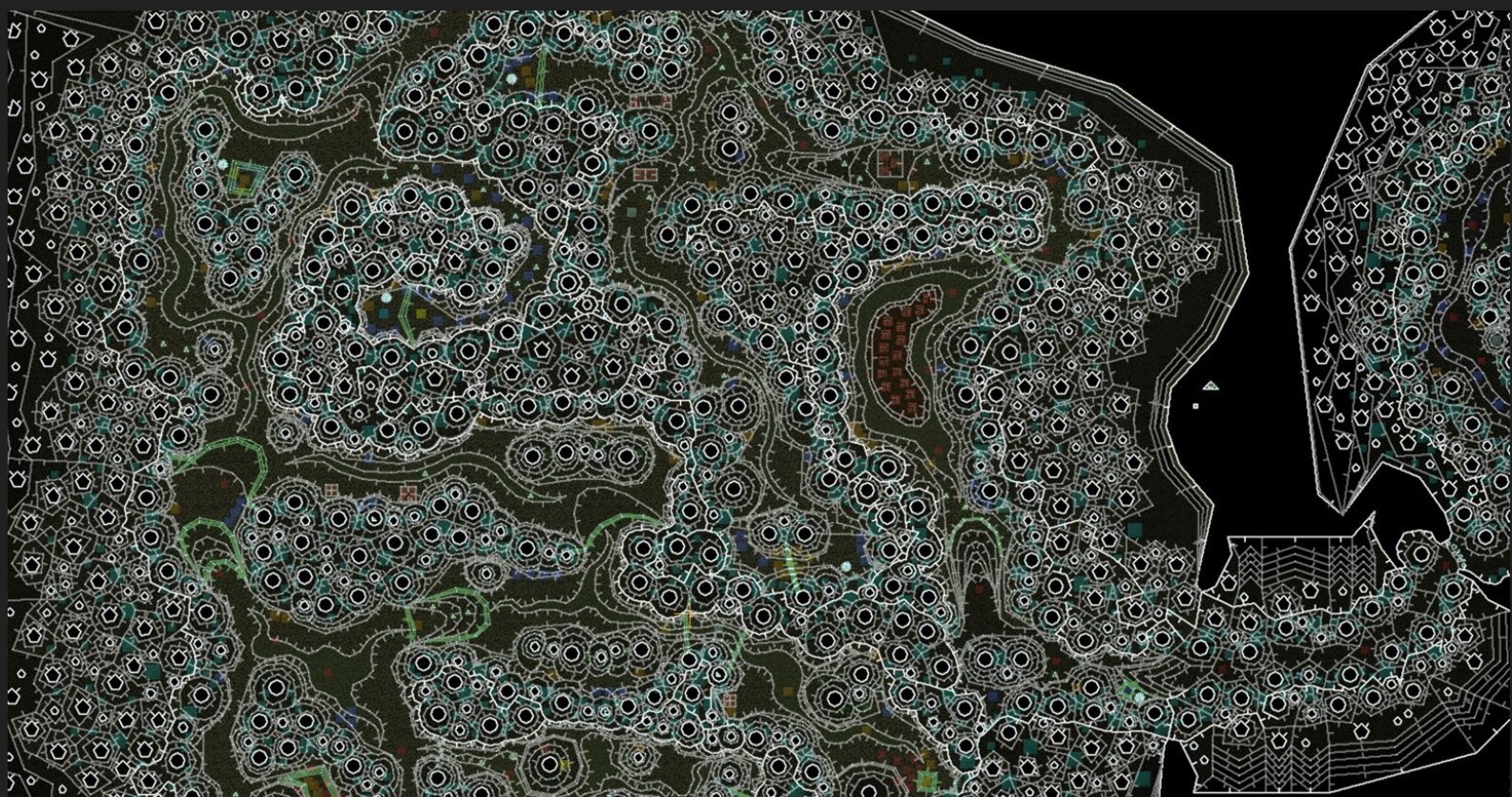
Detail of *Sunder Map 15: Babylon's Chimera* by Insane_Gazebo



Details of *Antaresian Reliquary Map32: Cheonsanggye* by Seongbae Park (antares031) and *Abandon Map17: New Life from Old* by Benjogami



Detail of *Eviternity Map32: Anagnorisis* by Ola Björling (ukiro)



Detail of *Gossip Map04: Tarantism* by Bartek Karoliński
(Touchdown)

Looping gif here - record brief section of gameplay
Phoebe

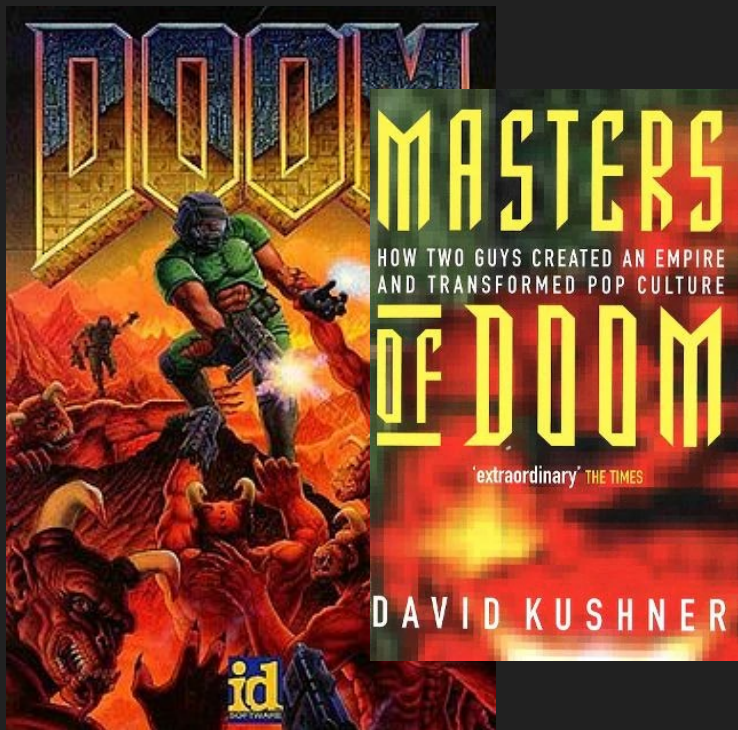
- *Slaughter*: hordes of monsters, overwhelming the player
- Players forced to adopt particular movement patterns and bait monsters into infighting, spaces are architecture for the player to move through and also for them to herd monsters through.
- Overwhelming sensations
- Overwhelming decision making and gameplay, + also spaces/scale



Breaking ZDoom v2.8.1 for artistic effect, the controversial Cacoward winner:
lilith by anotak



Mapping and New Expressions of Horror



Kushner, D. (2003). Masters of Doom: How two guys created an empire and transformed pop culture (1st ed). Random House.



- **DOOM & Bricolage: The Gothic, Body Horror, Cosmic Horror**





Vanilla DOOM as Horror

- DOOM & Bricolage: The Gothic, Body Horror, Cosmic Horror





Vanilla DOOM as Horror

- Disorienting With Space



Lam, C. (2024). The Simulated Weird: Video Games, Weird Fiction, and Gothic Horror [Thesis]. University of Otago.



Vanilla DOOM as Horror

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Vanilla DOOM as Horror

- DOOM as a Power Fantasy



Lam, C. (2024). The Simulated Weird: Video Games, Weird Fiction, and Gothic Horror [Thesis]. University of Otago.



DOOM & Control

“...videogames mix interactivity with predetermined boundaries and intrusive interventions that channel the player’s engagement with the game.”

“Horror games interface with the way in which technology is often imagined as demonic and Othered; the player is offered the challenge to defeat the technologically-based demon (aided by the ‘good’ elements of the technology), which, if achieved, can offer a pleasurable sense that the technology has been mastered.”





The Weird and the Eerie in DOOM Mapping

Something is present where it shouldn't be.

There is a lack of something that should exist.

Recall examples from previously in preso



Mapping and the Liminoid

“By playing as an avatar, a player performs the liminoid act of trying on a role without committing to the full liminal process of becoming it. As intensified by the temporally and spatially deconstructing characteristics of some liminoid situations, however, videogame roleplay can produce moments of postliminal structuration in which player and character synchronize.”

Phoebe's previous
capture

Changing the Fantasy

The space becomes the horror. Space is understood at the level of both embodied exploration through gameplay, and the aesthetic qualities of the map as a drawn object.

Difficulty is rethought. Challenge is structured around overwhelming and disorienting the player in a way that extends on those intents in the original game.

Mapping synchronizes between the player and the avatar. This ties back into Horrigan's concept of liminality in gameplay - the intended player experience is to be lost in the horror rather than surmounting it. At high levels of the experience is almost meditative and mandala-like.



Looking Forward

- Systematic Analysis of Maps:
 - Methodical analysis of maps in terms of this framework.
- Ethnographic Work With Community:
 - Talking to mappers about their artistic intent as designers of gameplay and space.
 - Talking to people who build tools about the community values embodied in those tools.
- Commercialisation versus DOOM purism:
 - Understanding the tensions that arise between amateur production and commercialisation of shared community knowledge.

Additional mapping discussion.