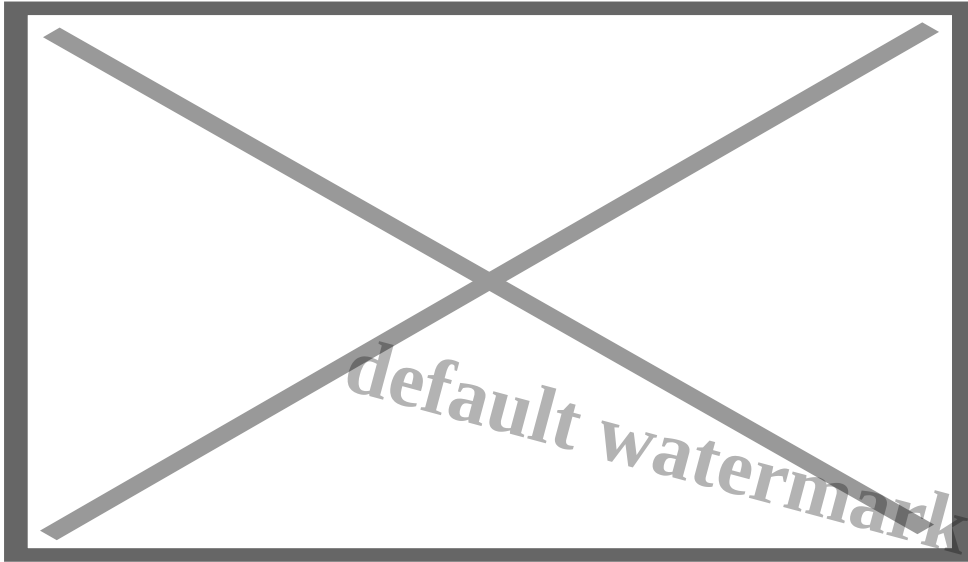


Firewatch “ Video Game Artistry

Description



I’ve been discussing a lot of pop culture/entertainment topics recently on my blog, but I hope you will forgive one more based on a video game entitled “Firewatch” developed by Campo Santo.

The plot of the game is not very complicated “ your character, Hank, goes into the Wyoming wilderness in 1989 as part of the forestry service to watch for fires in a watchtower (hence the title of the game) in Shoshone National Forest. Hank’s motivations for accepting this job are given in the heartbreaking opening, and slowly unveiled during the game, while you explore the wilderness and investigate some suspicious goings-on.

The game is played from the first-person point-of-view of Hank, and your sole companionship is a woman in another watchtower, Delilah, who communicates with you via walkie-talkie. The entire game is played that way, with Hank investigating mysterious fireworks, smoke, signals, etc., all while discussing the mystery and life with Delilah.

There are no action sequences, battles in the wilderness, a tense showdown with a villain or anything like that. You talk to Delilah while you walk/hike/jog through the woods. There is also no display that shows you where to go, like most video games these days, other than a compass and a map. But like life, it isn’t the destination that the game takes you that is important, but the journey and who you spend it with.

Probably the easiest way to describe Firewatch would be the loneliest game about people and communication you can imagine. And I loved it, even if the game didn’t last very long and it ended a bit flat. All told, it took me a few hours to complete the entire game and hunt down every forestry survival cache on the map. I wish the game was even longer and there were more places to go, as I could have spent hours wandering around those woods!

As you progress during the days of Firewatch, you find books, notes, backpacks, and more (and if youâ€™re lucky, a turtle which you can name), that will decorate your lookout tower the following day. And as the mysteries surrounding you and the fires deepen, you get emotionally invested in the story. I was genuinely moved numerous times while playing the game, wanting things to be ok for Hank and Delilah (and my pet turtle, Berkley Jr.).

But as good as the characters and their interactions are, the standout thing for me was the art.

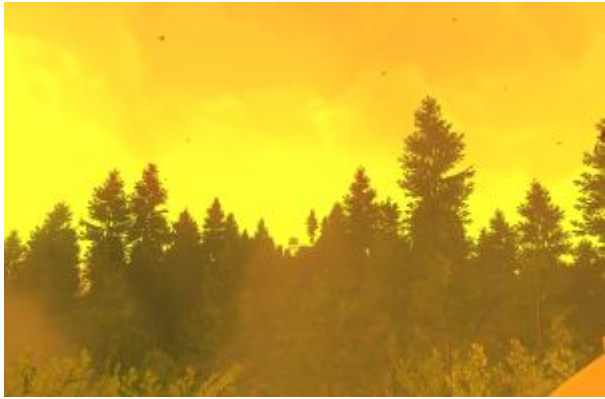
Early on in the game, you find an old point-and-shoot disposable camera, and you are then given free rein to take photos of anything and everything you encounter in the wilderness. In the gallery below, you can see all the photographs that I took during my time in the game. The photos are so nice that they are all, rotating on a daily basis, my desktop background.

There have been a lot of discussions over the past number of years focused around if video games should really be considered “art,” and while I think they absolutely are, take a look and decide for yourself. You can click each image below to see a full-screen version.





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Date Created

April 8, 2016

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