

# JOÃO ALMEIDA

Systems Game Designer

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Systems Game Designer with 8 years of experience designing and implementing gameplay systems in Unreal Engine 5 and Unity.

Specialized on player progression, difficulty structuring and designing mechanics that are readable, intentional and scalable.

Shipped a commercial title on Steam, managing scope, development priorities and release planning from prototype to launch.

## CORE SKILLS

- Gameplay, level and systems design
- Player psychology, pacing and flow
- Difficulty balancing and progression design
- Narrative design and world building
- Single-player and local co-op design
- Unreal Engine 5 (Blueprints)
- Unity (C#)
- Git, Visual Studio, Jira, Miro, Excel

## WORK EXPERIENCE

*Independent Game Designer - Midnight Light Games*

*Mar 2017 - Present*

### [A Tower's Will](#) – (Unreal Engine 5)

Precision 3D climbing platformer centered on physics-driven traversal and meaningful vertical progress loss on failure.

- Designed an auto-bouncing movement system with no jump input, where physics-driven movement depends on directional input, camera angle, surface slope, and collision behavior, allowing for varied and emergent outcomes
- Built the game around a consistent core move set available from the start, scaling difficulty through platform complexity and precision demands, in order to reinforce player mastery
- Designed a high-stakes fall system where failure causes major height loss, but players retain control mid-fall and can recover on lower platforms, balancing tension with player agency
- Tuned movement physics (acceleration, bounce response, timing windows) to ensure consistent and predictable player control
- Implemented a narrative state machine (19 emotional states) with transitions based on player progress and time spent climbing, reinforcing the tower as a living, reactive antagonist
- Produced in-engine intro and multiple performance-based ending [cinematics](#) (Unreal Engine 5 Sequencer), where completion time affects narrative outcome, rewarding mastery with expanded story resolution
- Added local 2-player co-op, adapting gameplay systems to support shared traversal without reducing challenge.
- Led audio direction in collaboration with a sound designer to reinforce emotional escalation and gameplay tension
- Implemented accessibility features, localization, input support, and Steam platform systems (achievements, Remote Play, cloud saves, global leaderboards) to support player inclusivity, social play, competitive engagement and improve player reach
- Defined a 12-month production scope and delivered the project within that timeframe

## **The Fur in Me – (Unity)**

2D precision platformer centered on color-based interaction systems and movement mechanics.

- Built the core movement system around familiar platformer conventions (run, jump, double jump) to establish an accessible foundation and then layered a color-matching mechanic on top to expand interaction rules and enable more varied challenge design
- Prototyped and evaluated multiple camera behaviors (fixed, axis-locked, and player-following) to control visibility and enable different types of platforming challenges
- Implemented multiple difficulty modes that modify core rules (reduced color sets, infinite jump assist, and rule inversion in hard mode), supporting different skill levels
- Implemented a performance scoring system based on completion time and number of defeats, awarding medals to encourage mastery and competitive replay
- Structured levels to introduce one mechanic at a time, allowing players to learn and practice it before gradually increasing challenge through more demanding combinations
- Designed systems to minimize player friction through frequent autosaves, fast respawns and challenge-focused level flow
- Implemented accessibility systems, localization and input support to improve player reach
- Led a 2D artist and composer to produce a polished [3-level vertical slice](#) with final art, music and narrative elements ([7 key story illustrations](#)) to showcase the game's core experience to potential players

### ***Unity Programmer - ByAR***

***Sep 2016 - Feb 2017***

- Developed full AR/VR applications for CUF Hospital and Navarra Aluminios
- Collaborated with the art team to integrate assets into Unity projects
- Built prototypes for Microsoft HoloLens, Android, and iOS

### ***Programmer - ITPeople***

***Sep 2015 - Jul 2016***

- Developed Android apps and AR experiences from scratch
- Released two Android games on the Play Store independently
- Collaborated with artists to implement visuals and interactions

### ***Programmer Internship - Imaginary Cloud***

***Jul 2014 - Aug 2014***

- Collaborate with project leads to develop two MVP Android apps using Java

## **EDUCATION**

*Instituto Superior Técnico – University of Lisbon*

*Bachelor's Degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering*

***2010 - 2015***

## **LANGUAGES**

*Portuguese – Native*

*English - Professional working proficiency*