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Self Arcana: A Self-Reflective, Story Based Tarot Game

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What is Self Arcana?

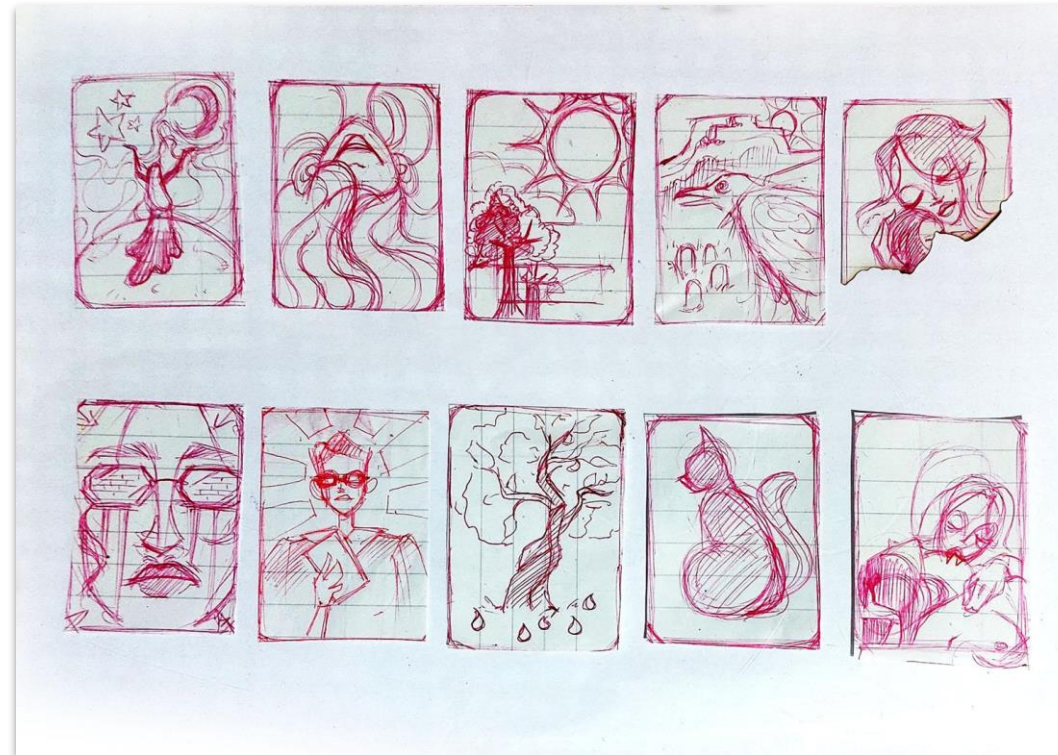
Self Arcana is a role playing game that requires players to design a set of tarot cards with symbols significant to their lives.

The aim is to create narratives and encourage self reflection through roleplay (or by evaluating the narratives created).

We took a research through design approach when creating the game.



Self Arcana



Card Design





Why tarot and roleplay for self reflection?

- Roleplaying games hold potential to aid players in their individuation process
- Active imagination can be practiced when roleplaying
- Archetypes are important for both roleplaying and active imagination
- Fool's Journey contains “deep rooted transformational archetypes”
- Tarot spreads were traditionally used to create narratives through the archetypes depicted on the cards
- “Archetypal themes are represented in each of the Major Arcana” (Kopp) and these can be associated with specific Jungian archetypes
- Personalized cards allow players to form a semiotic system and aids immersion



Design

We considered the following elements when designing the game:

- **Card Design**

- The Raider-Waite-Smith deck was our leadoff- the meanings of the cards could be grouped to simplify the deck
- We found parallels between the cards we initially created and the themes present in the Raider-Waite-Smith deck, suggesting archetypal engagement is present regardless of intent
- These groupings serve as a guideline for players to base their own cards on

- **Character Creation**

- Players are encouraged to create characters based on the following character types (Based on Bowman's "Nine Types of Roleplaying Characters")
 - Doppelganger: Play as yourself
 - Devoid: Play as yourself, devoid of one aspect
 - Fragmented: Play as a part of you that you wish to highlight
 - Repressed: Play as a character that highlights aspects you dislike about yourself/ your favorite villain
 - Idealized: Play as your ideal self/ a hero
 - Oppositional: Play as the opposite of yourself



Card Design



Self	The Fool
Creation	The Magician, High Priestess, and Empress
Connections and Duty	The Emperor, Hierophant, and Lovers
Conflict	The Chariot and Lovers
Source of Power/ Will	Justice, Hermit, and Strength
Transformation	The Wheel of Fortune, Hanged Man, and Death
Virtues	Temperance and Star
Ruin, Destruction, Chaos	The Devil and Tower
Enlightenment	The Moon, Sun, Judgment, and World



Example Cards

Example Card	Upright	Reversed
Goddess	Self	Shadow
God	Transformation	Enlightenment
Crow	Creation	Destruction
Mother	Source of Power	Duty
Sun	Virtues	Conflict



Design

- **Spreads**
 - Spreads provide a structure to build narrative on (e.g. 5 act story structure)
 - The game has two stages:
 - 1- Players roleplay with their own 5 cards, with the other player acting as the GM
 - 2- Players join cards and roleplay to form introspective dialogue
- **Location**
 - We encourage players to choose a familiar setting, especially in the latter half of the game to allow better communication of narratives and help with immersion.
- **Rituals**
 - Endgame rituals include:
 - Choosing one card to keep
 - Choosing one card to burn
 - Changing one card
 - Players are also encouraged to bring items or imagine symbols relating to the setting to enhance immersion
 - Rituals enhance the mythic aspects of the game





Playtest Results and Future Improvements

- Sample Scenario: “The Bar at the End of the World”
- Playtest-improvisation
- Limitations:
 - Freeform roleplaying resulted in lack of harmony
 - Players who have no previous experience with roleplaying or improvisation may have trouble with immersion
 - Roleplaying scenarios that have similarities with real life experiences may also be difficult
 - Personal intimacy between players also affects gameplay; this may both be an advantage and a disadvantage
- Improvisations:
 - Encouraging players to generate stories to then reflect on would provide better self understanding
 - Players should negotiate the game terms and story elements before starting the game session
 - Adding narrative structures may encourage the players to engage in roleplay

