

OBELISK

Capstone Project Proposal
Spring 2021

Process page- <https://wileywiggins.com/obelisk.html>

Obelisk is a game about debt and extraction, accompanied by 3d models of packaging and box contents, an ePub of a game manual, and a 3d modeled scene where the game can be played, all viewable in a web browser.

Games in popular culture that use extraction as a primary mechanic (Minecraft, Animal Crossing) rarely show any consequences of that extraction. In *Obelisk* the game has been eroded by its own primary mechanic to the point that it is barely playable.

Audiences often decode meaning from videogames even without having directly played them- they are often accompanied by a cloud of marketing assets and popular discourse- advertisements, trailers, streams and "let's-plays" that show us the game in a past-tense, passive way that seems to contradict previous ideas of what is essential about the form (1). Videogames can be infused with hype and expectations not just of their narrative qualities but of what interactions we can take part in within them, and who we can imagine ourselves to be while playing them.

In considering these different ways of experiencing a game, I found myself thinking back to early gaming, and the discrepancies between elaborate, sometimes lurid vintage game marketing and the technological limits of the games themselves. In *Obelisk* I use that discrepancy to contrast ideas of extraction, capitalist realism and media ideologies about videogames as escapist fantasy, videogames as an inhabitable space, videogames as the future.

In *Obelisk*, the game itself has been depleted to the point that it bears almost no resemblance to its box art, manual, or "feelies" (physical items included in the box). The game's manual describes a fantasy world that no longer exists.

This is a multi-layer art piece for people who may have found themselves "moving into" their fantasy worlds as the material world around them becomes increasingly uninhabitable.

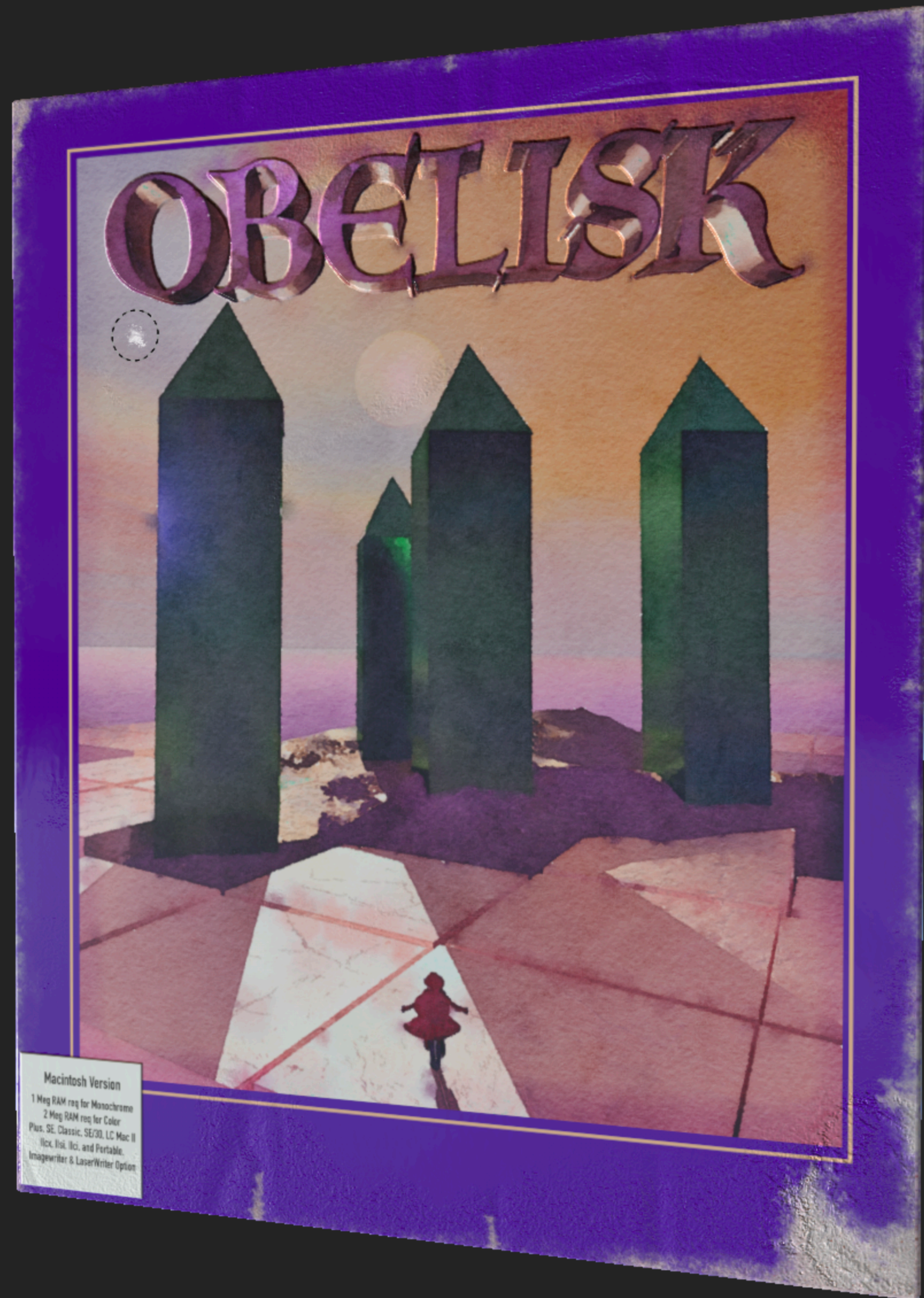
Planning board 4/13/21

<https://trello.com/b/VFp4K1av/obelisk>

Spring week 3	Spring Week 4	Spring Week 5	Spring Week 6	Spring Week 7	Spring Week 8
Click to dismiss bills	Level design	Manual story text generator	Model box	Networked editable readme file in GUI scene	Testing/ Bugfixes
test and polish bills locking and unlocking territories	narrative messages, pacing, npc's	Manual Map generation study	Model Map Object	Testing/ Bugfixes	Generate Manual Epub/Site with B-Ber
Finish Box art	Flower cellular automata	Manual Map generation implementation	Model Capstone "Feelie"	+ Add another card	Assemble all assets in show
+ Add another card	expanding locked Obelisk territories push player off edge OR npc's push player off edge	+ Add another card	Model computer/scene that launches game		+ Add another card
	+ Add another card		+ Add another card		

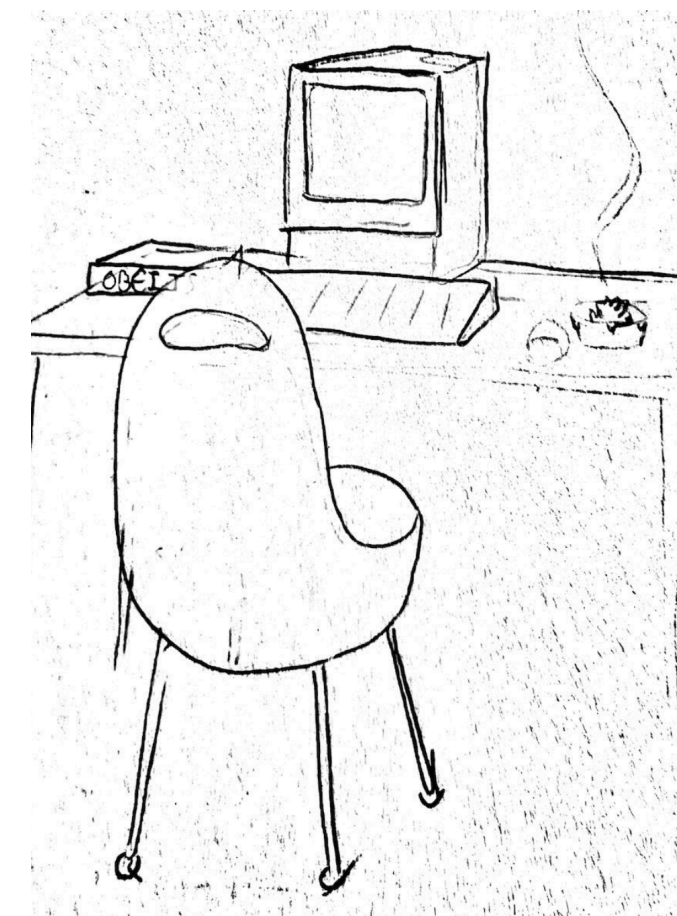
Resources/Materials:

This is an all-digital project with web deliverable assets.



Boxed materials will have a digital form that can be situated in a multiplayer 3d space (an epub/static site for the manual, 3d models, the game itself in a WebGL build or download, all situated in a 3d modeled personal computer and desk). The game will launch from a mock Mac GUI desktop recreated In Unity.

I'm writing scripts to auto-generate expansive tables of potions, runes and other RPG trappings that will appear in the manual, but none of these elements will actually appear in the game. NPC's might dimly remember that such a world existed.



Questions and concerns-

How the elements are situated depends on the format of the senior show.
Without a New-art city style show, I'll embed the box, epub reader, webgl build
and models in a webpage.

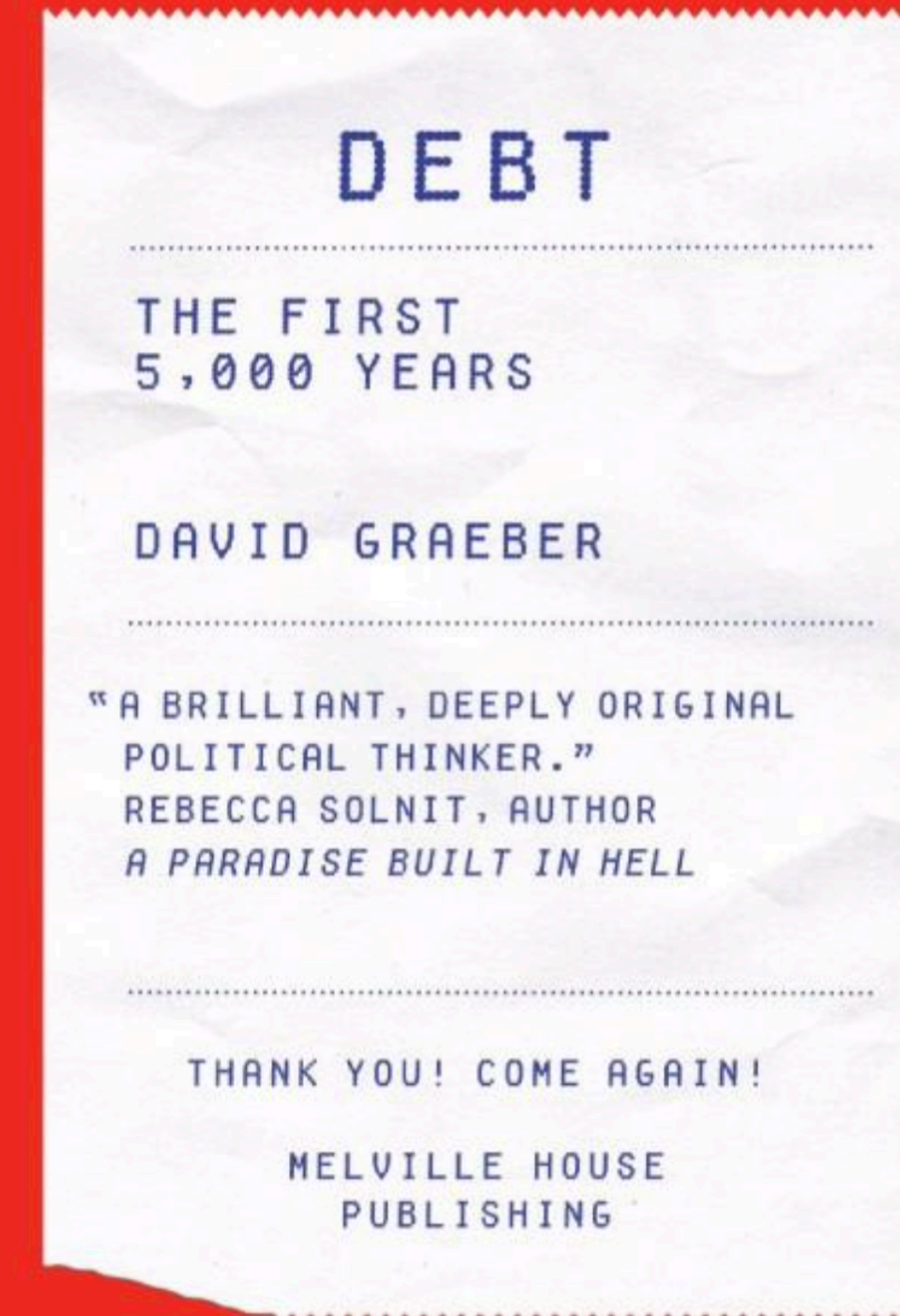
The riskiest part of the project is the manual, which relies on a lot of python
content generators, only one of which I've written so far.

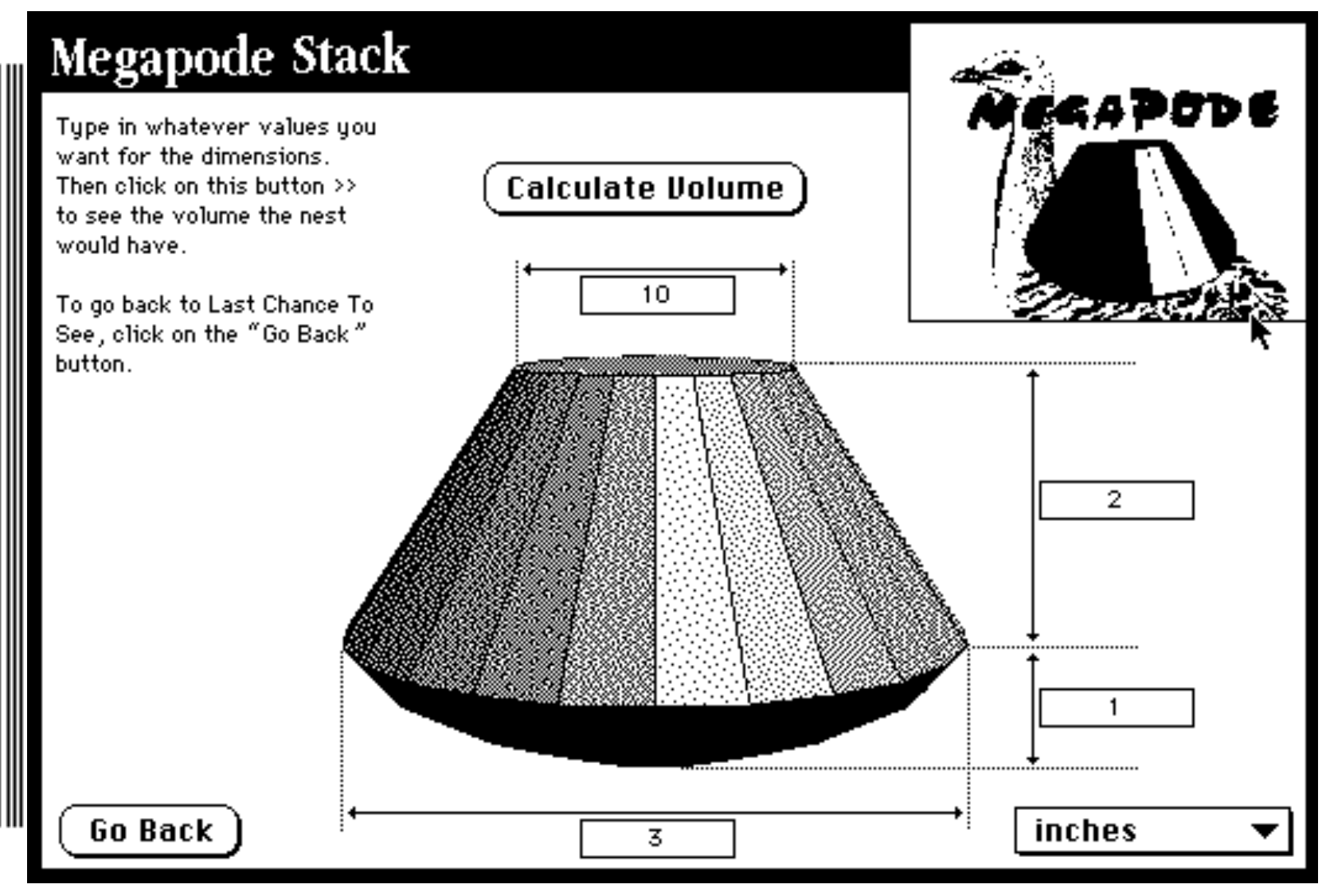
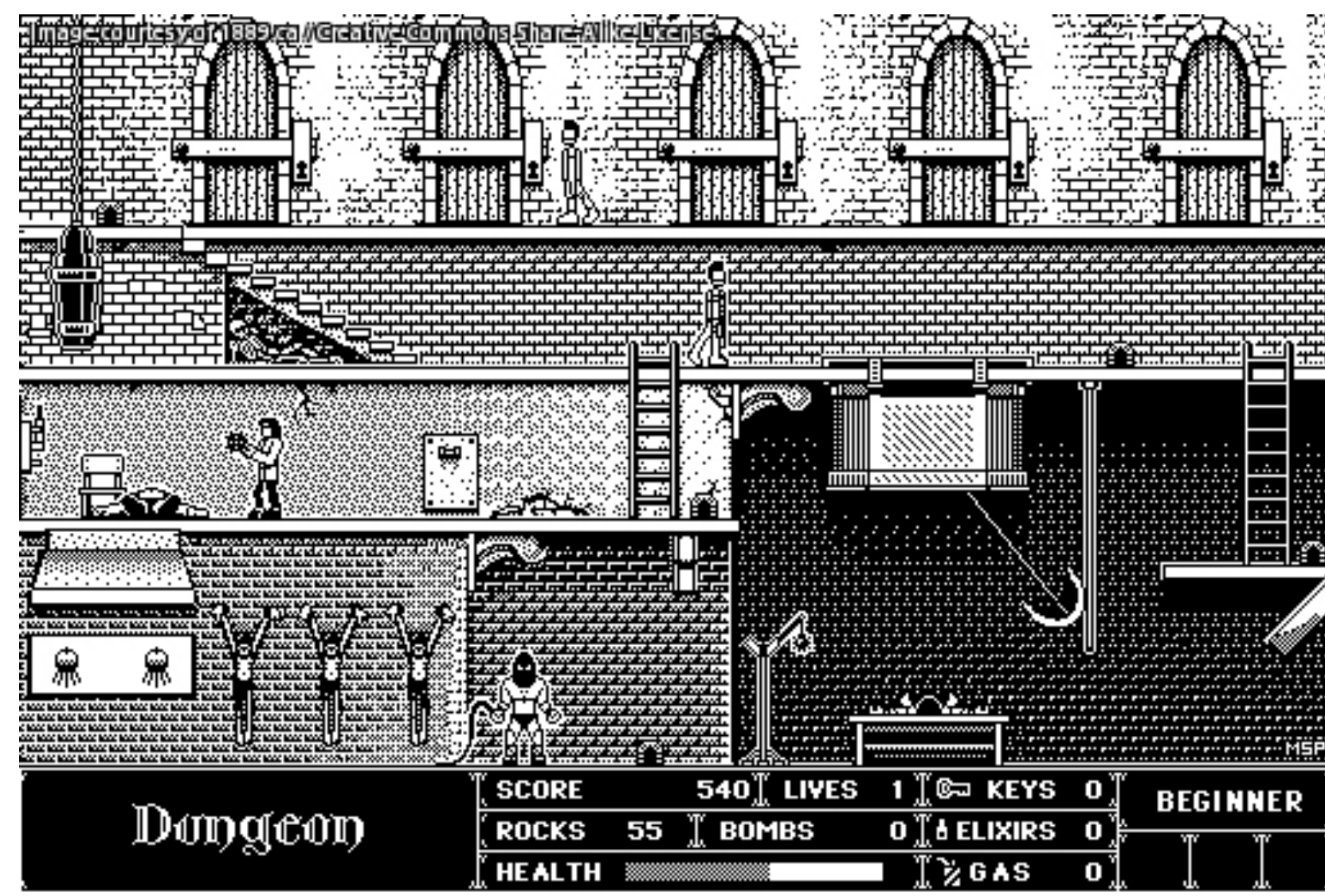
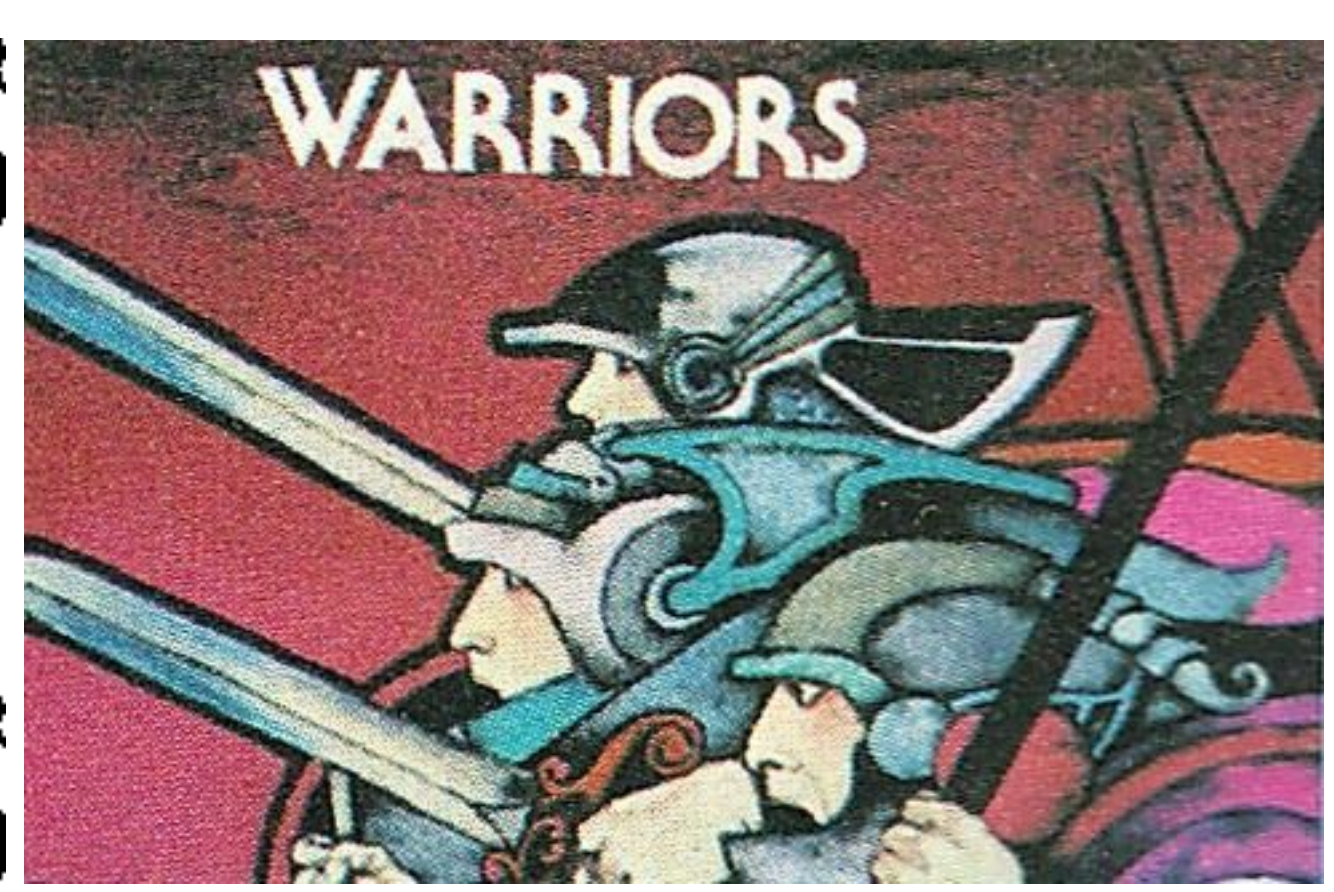
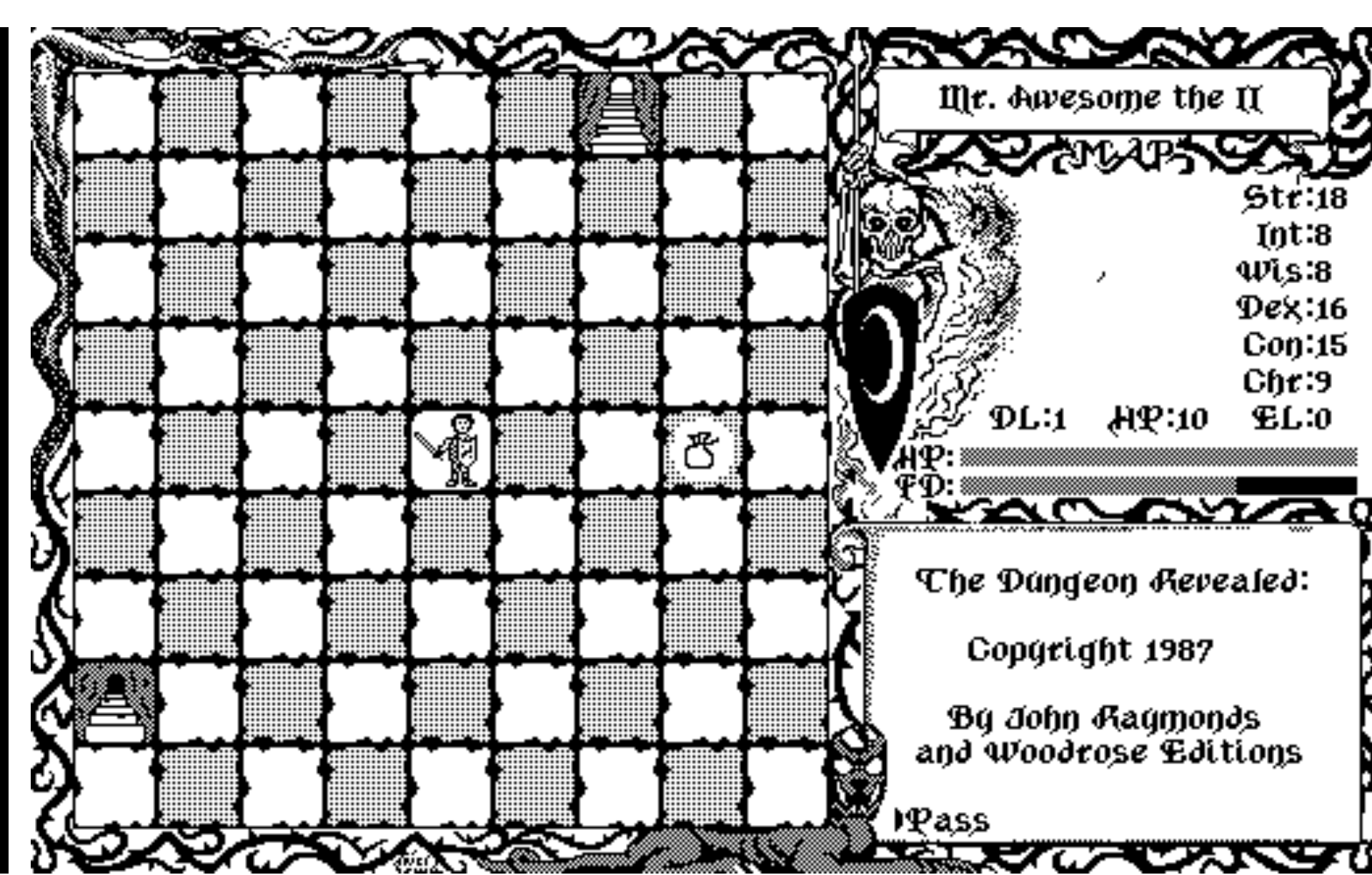
Conceptual References-

"Debt" by David Graeber

Debt is an anthropological look at pre-monetary societies and how they were based not on barter, but on debt, and how concepts of debt have evolved over time.

In Obelisk there is a material resource (blocks) and notions of credit and debt that come from usable stacks of blocks (obelisks) that incur debt on characters in their vicinity. Debt ticks up over time spent in obelisk territories. Debt is paid automatically from a player's carried blocks. Players may pull blocks from obelisks, from other places where they have been placed as barriers, or from the ground- each ground tile is made up of a single block, and if that block is removed an un-walkable dead zone is created.





Visual References:
 Early Macintosh pixel art,
 fantasy art (pictured: Bob
 Pepper)

**For sketches and process pictures, please visit the full process page at
<http://wileywiggins.com/obelisk.html>**

(1). See also: "Games Without Players", Paolo Pedercini,
<https://www.molleindustria.org/blog/games-without-players/>