

MDA Breakdown

Elden Ring



SOURCE: Elden Ring Official Website

Overview

“Elden Ring” is an action-RPG videogame developed by FromSoftware and released in 2022. This document discusses the MDA breakdown of the game, presenting its aesthetics, related dynamics, and the mechanics these are based upon.

As “Elden Ring” is a complex title, rich of aesthetics, dynamics, and mechanics, this analysis will focus only on a small portion of those, as the aim of this document is to present a didactic report to study the MDA framework in depth rather than dissecting the game under consideration in detail.

Aesthetic: Expression

In “Elden Ring” players feel allowed to be themselves. This macroscopic aesthetic is found in different facets, branching out into:

- **Moral expression (ME)**, the feeling of freedom that players find in role-playing their character.
- **Appearance expression (AE)**, when players feel free to express through the aesthetic appearance of their character.
- **Gameplay expression (GE)**, when players feel free to express through the strategy they apply in different situations and the build of their character.

Dynamics:

- Role-play (ME).
- Active participation and manipulation of questlines flow (ME).
- Influence on events, places, and characters (ME).
- Personalization of character's appearances (AE).
- Personalization of character's weapons, armour, and build (GE).
- Customization of strategy and behaviour (GE).

Mechanics:

- Different selectable character's features, such as hair colour, hairstyle, body shapes, and voice tones.
- Different questlines with links, dependencies, and influences on each other.
- A system of dialogues, descriptions, and interaction with NPCs and environments.
- Different weapons and armours, with unique effects, stats, looks and narrative significance.
- Different and unique enemy move sets and windows of opportunity.
- Elevated points, obstacles, barriers, and passageways of different sizes.

Aesthetic: Discovery

In “Elden Ring” players feel to be exploring the unknown. Players perceive a sense of completion that emerges when analysing and exploring a specific area in detail, discovering its secrets.

Dynamics:

- Search and discovery of secrets and hidden rewards.
- Discovering never-before-seen enemies, locations, and artifacts.
- Collection of all available objects in an area.
- Construction of the mental map of an explored area.

Mechanics:

- Collectable rewards.
- Variety of enemies, collectable objects, and environments.
- Visual clues and highlighting of points of interest.
- Secret passages, invisible walls, lifts, levers, blocked passages.

Aesthetic: Narrative

In “Elden Ring” players feel to be immersed in a narrative world. This aesthetic is found when players feel they are slowly understanding something convoluted and unknown, until they understand it fully or when players come face to face with something they knew by hearsay, or that had been predicted to them by the game, feeling a sense of solemn satisfaction.

Dynamics:

- Speculation and theorisation.
- Analysis of known information.
- Recognition of characters, locations, and other narrative elements.

Mechanics:

- Cutscenes and descriptive artworks.
- Unique and lore-significative behaviours, moves and abilities of enemies.
- Descriptions and dialogues rich in detail about the game world, the plot, and the characters.
- Displacement of NPCs in different areas of the game.
- Change and evolution of characters models and dialogues as the game advances.