I Am Dead is a cute, charming game about being a curious ghost

Around two years ago, artist and designer Dick Hogg saw a GIF of a banana going through an MRI machine. Seeing the different layers of the fruit was mesmerizing. It inspired him. Not long after, Hogg called up his game design partner, Ricky Haggett, and said simply, "I really want to make a game that does *this*."

Now, the pair is ready to show off the result: *I Am Dead*, a cute and colorful game that's launching on the Nintendo Switch and PC later this year. It's essentially a puzzle game. You play as Morris Lupton, the newly deceased curator of a museum in a small British island, who uses his ghostly powers to see into objects and learn more about their owners. (He also gets some help from his dog who, obviously, is also a ghost.)

Lupton can float around the island and peer into the minds of various residents to learn about objects that are important to them. He then has to find said objects by peeling back layers of things; in one instance during a brief hands-off demo, I saw the developers delve into an old armchair and find a remote and some coins underneath, and later venture inside of a beehive full of lots of buzzing creatures.

It's beautiful to watch, though it can be a bit hard to describe how things play out. You're better off watching the gameplay walkthrough below:

[embedded content]

Hogg and Haggett previously made the whimsical musical adventure *Hohokum* as well as *Wilmot's Warehouse*, a game about being very organized. Hogg says that the inspiration for *I Am*

Dead came not just from a desire to run everyday objects through an MRI scanner, but also an urge to put worldbuilding and storytelling at the forefront. Games like *Hohokum* had colorful characters and intriguing worlds, but players quickly sped through them while playing. *I Am Dead*, on the other hand, is much more slowly paced, asking players to closely analyze objects and, over time, learn more about the island and its inhabitants.

"We felt like we'd put a lot of love into the worldbuilding of *Hohokum*," Hogg says. "But because *Hohokum* doesn't have any text in it, or any voice over, it's all stuff that's just implied. A very specific type of very observant person sees it and gets joy from it. But a lot of people just whizz through that game and they don't really notice the funny little in-jokes. We were talking a lot about making a game where the kinds of stories and worldbuilding that we made pushed itself to the front, and was a thing the player was closer to."

In the little bit I saw, *I Am Dead*'s small island town is certainly worth exploring. On one hand, it's a quintessentially English seaside town, a former fishing village that has since turned to tourism and the arts, with a ferry shuttling visitors daily. But it's also quite strange. There are bird people and fruit people; the budding arts community includes a sculptor who is an apple and a critic who is a pipe-smoking pear. One of the most popular restaurants serves nothing but toast because there's a race of fish people who love the novelty of dry food.

"There's definitely a sensibility across all of our games."
It's all very quirky and charming, the kind of place you'd want to spend some time in poking around, which is good since that's the entire premise of the game. *I Am Dead* may have an ominous title and premise, but there's nothing dark or

uncomfortable about it. It’s almost soothing — which is something of a trend for the developers. In many ways, *I Am Dead* is very different from the games Haggett and Hogg have made in the past, but the pair believes that there’s a common thread running through all of its creations.

“There’s definitely a sensibility across all of our games,” says Hogg. “We’re really focused on making games which aren’t stressful, and which are quite relaxing. We’ve had people say they find our games therapeutic, and that’s something that I really strive for. Every time we talk about making a game, we like to try to make something very different from what we’ve made before. At the same time, you can’t help being who you are, and hopefully a lot of our personality and enthusiasm comes across in the game.”

https://www.theverge.com/2020/8/14/21366568/i-am-dead-game-preview-switch-pc-steam-annapurna-interactive