

GRIS

Gris is a platform adventure game that portrays a young girl dealing with painful experiences in her life.

The main mechanics of the game is running and jumping. However, as the game progresses, Gris gains the ability to ground pound (the ability to become heavy and break objects), double jump, swim and sing (the ability to bloom flowers and awaken animals). All these mechanisms fit perfectly in the scope of the game.

At the beginning of the game, Gris is only able to walk and is surrounded by empty space. A few minutes into the game as the screen pulls outwards and reveals birds, rocks and other environmental elements, running and jumping is introduced to the game, and the player is allowed ample time to test these new mechanics and familiarize themselves with the controls. The inventive use of parallax world design and a dynamic camera that zooms in and out to create a sense of scale, makes the push to keep moving forward irresistible.

The game's visual effects and the touching background score captures the players' attention and immerses them in the game. The environment is apt with the theme of the game which is despair. Very little color is used but it effectively tells the story. The game takes the player through an emotional journey of discovery.

When players play the game for the first time, they are captured by the stunning art and beautiful scenery. But the second time around, the player finds the levels devoid of any challenge and will find finishing the game too tedious. At one point in the game, the player is chased by an underwater creature, but the creature leaves the player unharmed. By having monsters or enemies in the game that do not harm, the player will put in no effort to dodge their attacks or avoid them. By adding enemies in the game that actually harm the player, the gameplay is improved and it also introduces challenging levels that the game lacks currently. This increases the replayability of the game.

The game mechanics are lacking, and focus is given to visual aesthetics. However, in many instances of the game, the platform blends into the background and cannot be distinguished, confusing the players. In several situations, the player can be confused about whether a rock can be climbed or whether it is part of the background. Giving a slight depth to the environment can enable it to be distinguished from the platform while retaining the visual aesthetics. This reduces the frustration of the players who would otherwise have a hard time finding the correct playing ground.

Throughout the game, Gris moves forward trying to find lit orbs that enable her to gain new abilities and create pathways made of constellations.



Fig 1 : creating pathways made of constellations

She is able to travel to four areas: desert filled with wind-mills, forest, underwater caverns and world of buildings made of light. Apart from the orbs, she encounters various other creatures that lead her on the right path. When the Gris reaches the first orb, she is made to stop and the screen closes in on it. Additionally, the glow of the orb innately tells the player to collect it. On collecting the orb, the player gets sufficient amount of feedback through animation that tells them to keep collecting the orbs.

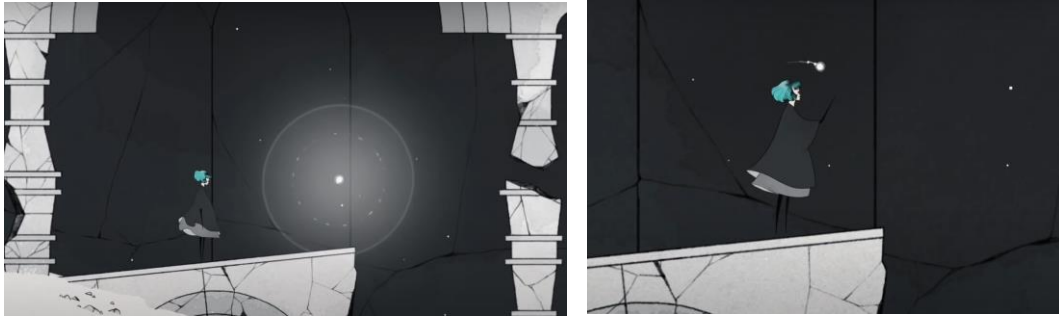


Fig 2 & 3: Collecting the orb

When significant events occur for the first time (eg, collecting the orb), the screen closes in which tells the player it's the right thing to do.

Aesthetically, the game hits all the marks. The game initially starts grey with very few elements but slowly, color is eased into it. The music in each scene is different and matches the tone of the level. The change of scenes/ levels are beautifully tied together using elements in the world. Eg: transition from desert to forest is through player sliding down huge vines. The game also uses valving where after reaching some points, the path breaks so the player can't back track.

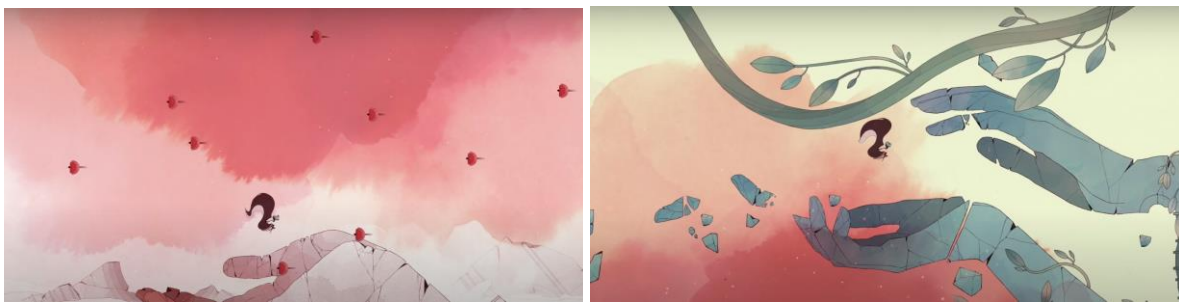


Fig 4 & 5: Color easing into the game at each level

Visual cues are not the only good design aspects in the game. Auditory cues help the player predict situations as well. In the windmill levels, the sound and the visuals of the windmill fans rotating indicates that the wind is going to blow. This prepares the player to get ready to look for shelter from the wind which would carry the player off. The caves and broken buildings are spaced at good intervals which allows the player to time their movement correctly and not fly off when the wind blows. The wind carries the player only to a very short distance so it doesn't frustrate players.

New mechanics are introduced in the game gradually and the player is introduced to situations where the mechanic is useful before getting the new mechanic itself. This allows the player to get a quick grasp of the mechanics. The player gains these abilities when they reach a certain checkpoint, and the instructions to use the mechanic are shown on screen. Different ways to use the mechanics are

introduced first through small examples and then scaled to bigger use cases. This allows the player to be prepared and not confused. Eg: The player can also use the heavy mechanism to break big rocks and form smaller ones and create a new path.

Each mechanic can be used at any point in the game after being introduced. However, the newly introduced mechanic is predominantly used. The player gets visual cues to use each mechanic. For example, when the player sees a flock of tiny birds, they can double jump and fly from that point. If there are cracks on the floor, they can use the ground pound mechanic, etc.

As the game progresses, the difficulty does not increase significantly. The player is however given the opportunity to use a blend of the mechanics as the game progresses.

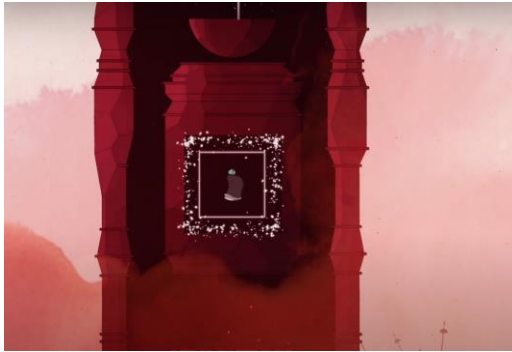


Fig 6: Gris gains new abilities/mechanics

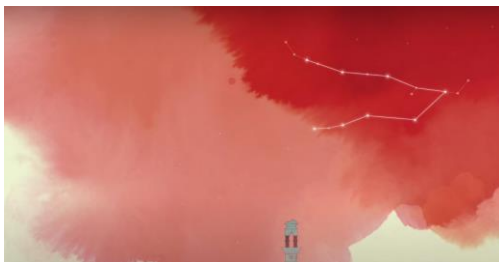


Fig 7: Forming the constellations at the end of each level

At each level, a new part of the constellation is drawn. This method of foreshadowing tells the player that the objective is to collect more orbs to complete the constellation without having to display instructions explicitly.