

Disclaimer:

The design documentation shown here was originally completed within a confluence space however for the purpose of sharing it has been moved onto this google document (hence its large page number count). As one of the lead designers for this project it was also my job to organise and write the design documentation below, alongside programming and developing the game. **All of the work within this document was jointly completed by myself and another teammate.**

The finished game/product can be found by following this Itch IO link:

<https://devdyldogs.itch.io/themeinthemirror>

The Me In The Mirror

Design Documentation

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Game overview: The Me In The Mirror

Do you recognize me?



(in game main menu screenshot)

Game name:

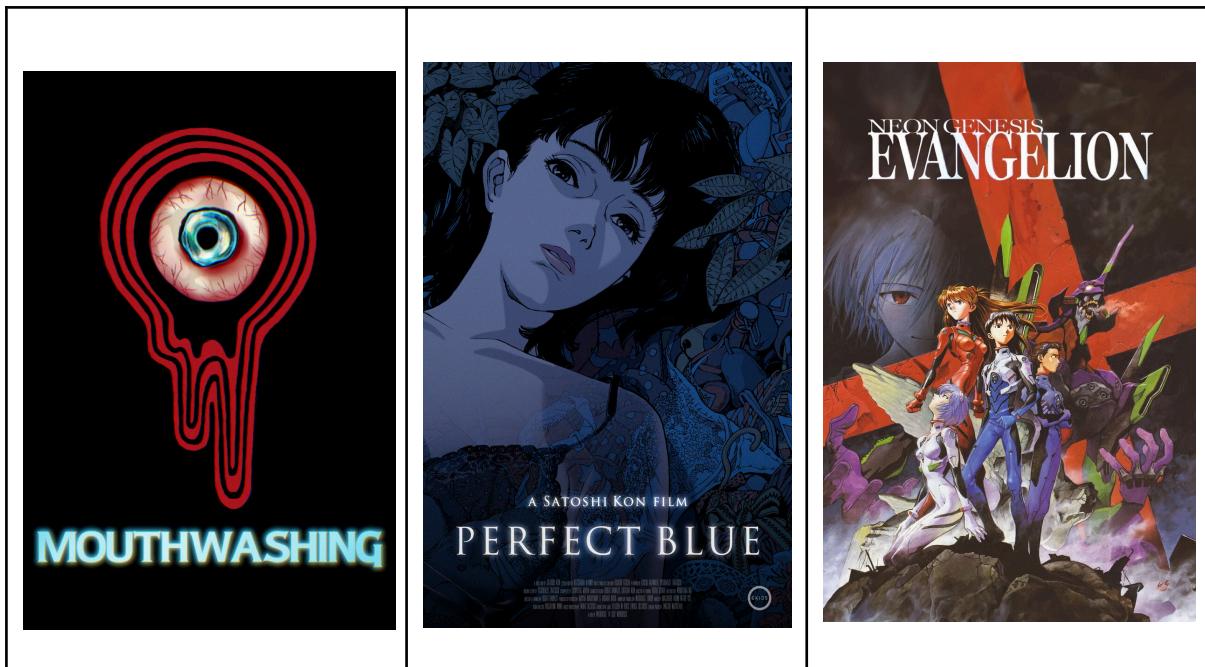
The Me in The Mirror

X statement:

Do you recognize me?

Razor statement:

The gameplay and atmosphere of “Mouthwashing” mixed with the profound themes, tension building and surreal elements of “Perfect Blue” and “Neon Genesis Evangelion”.



Elevator statement:

Are you sure that's you in the mirror? The Me in the Mirror is an intense and uncomfortable psychological horror walking simulator placing players in the shoes of Daisy whilst she suffers from depersonalization-derealization disorder and attempts to recover from an abusive relationship.

Expected project completion:

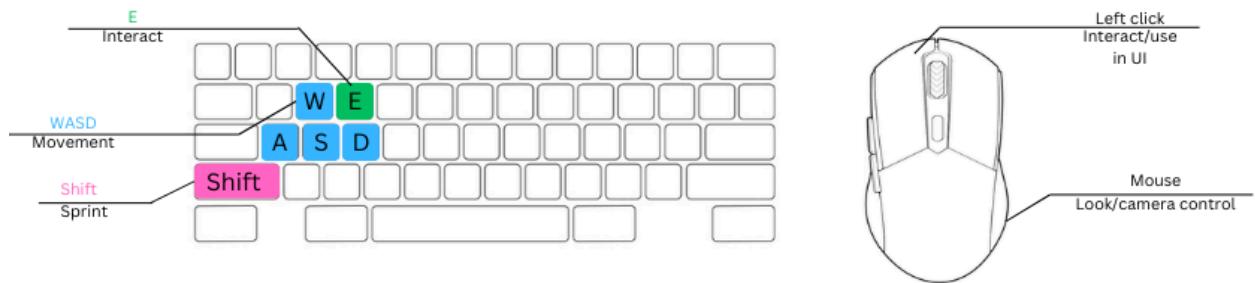
16th January 2025

Genres:

Psychological horror, puzzle solving, walking sim

Controls:

Mouse and Keyboard



Target Audience:

- Aimed at an audience of 16 or over
- Targeted towards fans of: Silent Hill 2, Perfect Blue, Neon Genesis Evangelion and narrative heavy, interpretive and analytical media
- Aimed at the PC player base

References/inspiration:

Mouthwashing, Doki Doki Literature Club, Silent Hill 2, Neon Genesis Evangelion, Perfect Blue, Death Stranding, Fatal Frame II, Dark Souls

Tech/software used:

Design centric tools/software	Development centric tools/software
Confluence	Unreal Engine 5.5
Jira	Blender
Canva	Adobe Premiere Pro
Draw.io	Github
Discord (used for direct communication)	Mixamo
Figma	Fab

Game summary:

Players will follow Daisy as she attempts to go through her normal routine split between the 4 levels, getting dressed in the morning, travelling to work, working in an office and travelling back home as reality slowly crumbles around her. Haunted by her past abusive relationship and the DPDR it left her with gives Daisy and by extension the player no choice but to confront this deep rooted trauma and her loosening tether on reality and herself.

Player goals:

<u>Long term goal</u>	<u>Medium term goal</u>	<u>Short term goal</u>
Collect all trauma objects and destroy them	Defeat the trauma object and collect it	Solve environment based puzzles Find the trauma object within the level

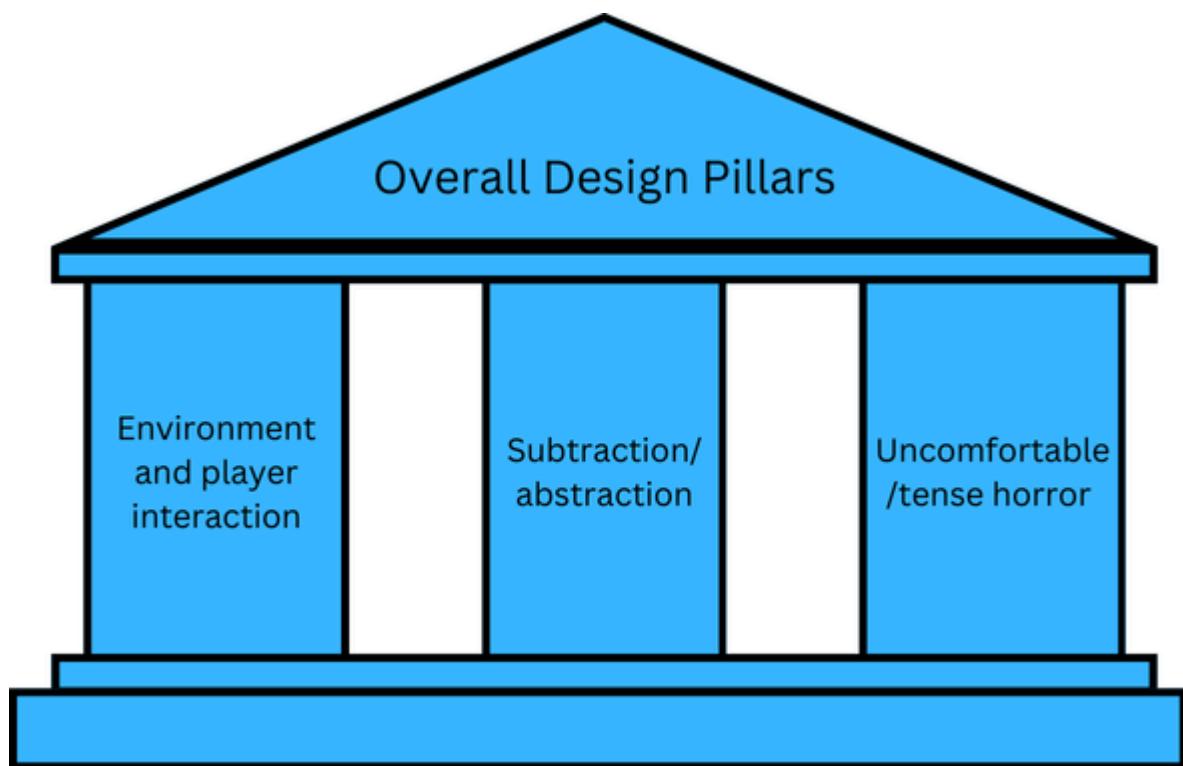
Design philosophy:

Our main goal with this project is to create an engaging and intense horror experience through intrinsic and atmospheric means. We want the player to have a memorable experience without the use of cliche or insulting horror tactics. From a gameplay perspective we are aiming for a strong synergy between our levels and puzzles to not only provide a difficult puzzle solving experience but also emphasise our theme of derealization through the confusion the players will feel.

Another critical philosophy we follow is design by subtraction. This popular philosophy is best known for its usage in Team Ico's (GENdesigns') games. It states that any mechanic or game element that does not link to the overall theme should

not be included, only elements that are essential should be present. We follow this philosophy closely especially in our enemy, player and level design, ensuring that these 3 key elements create a cohesive and impactful narrative/horror experience.

Design pillars:



Primary story theme:

Our central story theme is **depersonalization-derealization disorder**. The game centers around Daisy's experience with the disorder and how its drastic psychological effects limit and change how she goes about her everyday routine/life. This theme should be present throughout every aspect of the game's design in order to properly integrate it into the experience from both a narrative and theoretical point of view as well as an in-gameplay and environment point of view.

Secondary story themes:

On top of our main theme, The Me In The Mirror also has sub themes that should be explored throughout the levels. These themes should not be as emphasised as the main theme in terms of game mechanic design however they should be present in the environment or within momentary set pieces. They should be an undertone that helps expand upon the mental health problems Daisy suffers from and how they affect her daily routine or help strengthen the depersonalization-derealization she suffers.

- Loneliness
- Social anxiety
- Suicide
- Depression
- Depersonalization
- Abuse

Remarkability/USP:

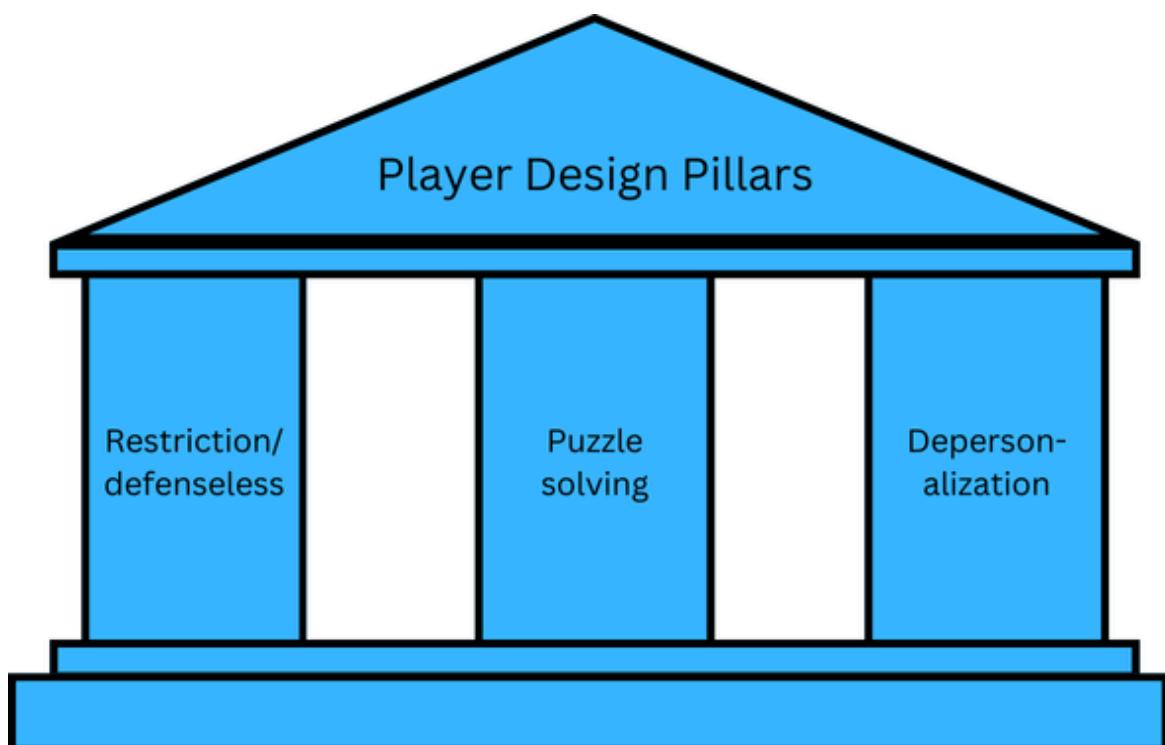
- Consistent usage of high quality mirrors across the environment.
- The enemy is only visible when looking into a mirror
- Trauma object sequences that blend the tension of similar scenes from Evangelion with the video game medium and its interactivity

Player Design:

Design Philosophy:

Our goal is to provide players with a deeply disturbing, psychological horror experience through both the restrictions placed on the player mechanically and through the way the player links to other game elements such as level design and enemy design. Players should feel defenceless and tense as they solve the environments many puzzles and push their way through the games levels. We will employ a series of segments designed to confuse the player through breaking patterns and established game rules while using traditional horror tactics to keep them guessing and scared. Much like the rest of the experience we employ a design by subtraction philosophy ensuring only elements critical to the experience are included to aid in increasing game cohesion and streamlining scope.

Design Pillars:



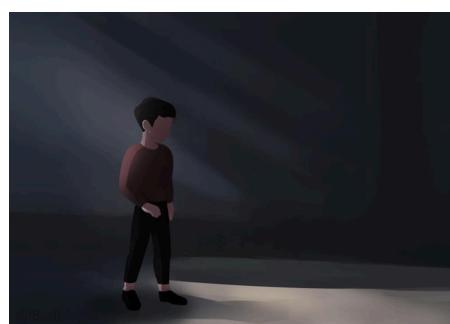
Player visual design:

The player will play as a woman named Daisy, their model should be extremely simple consisting of 3 clearly defining features these being the player's shirt colour, hair and facial scar. These 3 features and the player's silhouette should be the only defining features. On top of this the players model should be faceless to further our themes but also reduce the need for a complex model and facial animations/rigging. The lack of complexity in the players model ensures that there is more room for us as designers to emphasise these elements and adhere to our design by subtraction philosophy through the players character model.

The player's model should follow a similar design as the player model from Inside or Limbo. It should be minimal and noticeable.



Player model from Limbo



Player model from Inside

As the game continues the player's primary shirt colour should slowly transition from its base colour to red. By the time the player reaches the end of level 4 their shirt should be a bright red. This signals the decrease in the characters mental health and DDD through the red in the environment being absorbed by the player, as though they are internalising and being affected by it more severely. On top of this, the defining features can be modified to help further a scripted sequence or player shock. For example, the player's scar could be increased in size until it is a large open cut covering their face.

Player experience goal:

- Player should feel as though they have stepped into the shoes of the protagonist through the restrictions placed on the player mechanically as well as through in game elements they can interact with such as mirrors
- Players should feel uncomfortable, tense and lonely through these mechanical restrictions preventing their ability to defend themself from dangers, carefully crafted uncomfortable gameplay sequences as well as their minimal interaction with elements of the environment creating a disconnect between the two and serving our themes of derealization. (DDD)
- We want to play on player's expectations and fear by placing them in situations where they expect something to happen due to atmosphere and level design while subverting their expectations to keep them feeling tense but engaged.

Player objective:

- Advance through levels via solving complex puzzles
- Collect trauma objects to power the train at the end
- Explore and discover more of the main characters trauma eventually painting a full picture of their backstory
- Survive enemy encounters

Meta critical game breakdown:

<u>Hour to hour:</u>	<u>Minute to minute:</u>	<u>Second to second:</u>
Collected all traumatic objects	Uncovering story through trauma sections and environment	Players move throughout the environment
Destroying all traumatic objects in the final encounter within the last level	Encountering and solving puzzles	Interact with objects/environment elements around them
	Collecting traumatic object at the end of the level	
	Enemy and surreal encounters/sequences	

Key moments:

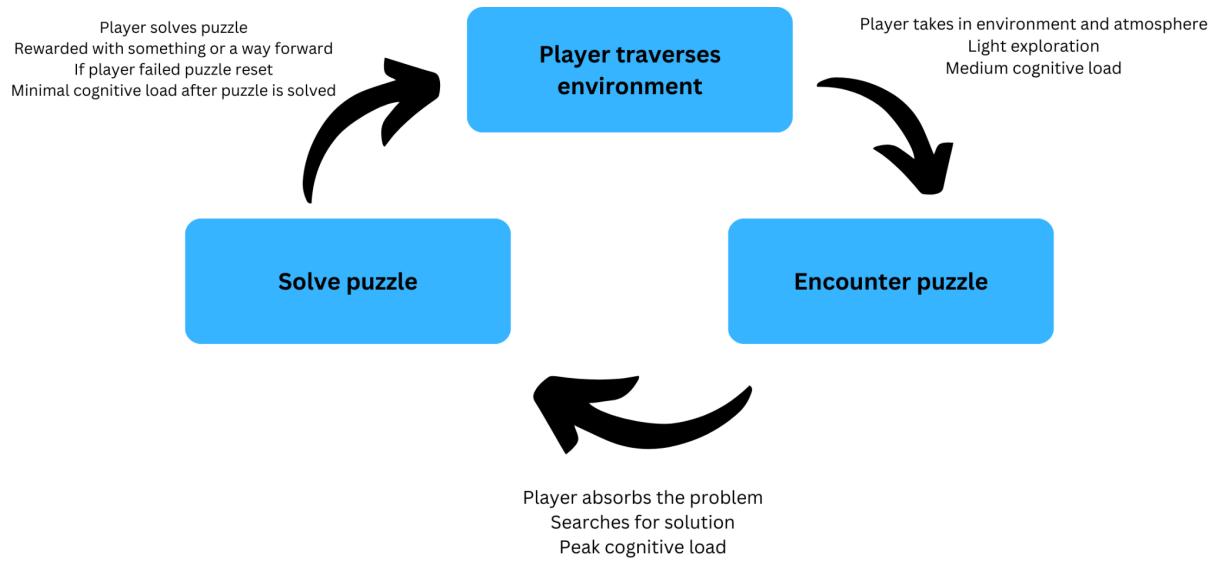
The beginning of level 1 - Provides the player with a basic tutorial and establishes basic game rules. Provides the player with an initial positive experience of the game before breaking that and introducing the uncomfortable horror aspects. Establishes who the player is and setting of the game

Trauma Segments (key struggle) - Establish and further Daisy's backstory through giving the player insight on what has happened to Daisy and her current mental state. Allows the player to collect the traumatic objects after defeating the sequence and overcoming Daisy's trauma. Height of surrealism, horror and pacing.

Surreal Segments (key struggle) - Slow paced segments that provide the player with an uncomfortable experience before transitioning into another area or level. These segments should break consistent game rules/structure to confuse and disorientate players.

Ending (resolution point) - gives the player the reward of reaching the end of a level or the entire game. All of the trauma objects the player has defeated and then collected are destroyed in the last carriage of the train. This provides the player with fulfilling closure and an understandable end point that relieves the tension built up throughout the experience.

Gameplay loops:



Scaring/building tension is continuous, enemy is always present no matter the loop stage/state

Mechanics:

Core mechanics:

Our core mechanic is the players ability to walk and move around the 3D environment/space requiring them to navigate towards objectives, puzzles and their solutions. Players control the character via standard WASD keyboard inputs, this allows them to move in 8 directions with 360 degrees of motion. The direction the character moves in is also controlled by the orientation of the players camera. This type of movement is very similar to others instances found within the industry such as Mouth Washing.

Where our movement differs from many is through the restrictions placed upon it. Players are unable to jump, crouch or use any other form of advanced movement modification. This helps further our themes of DDD and increase horror aspects through restrictive, tank like gameplay mechanics. The basic movement should be sluggish and feel tired to place further restrictions on the player and further our themes. There should be a slight head bob effect to further simulate and ground movement.

On top of the basic movement players can sprint. This gives them a continuous boost in speed without a cooldown or stamina system. This sprint whilst giving the player a boost in movement speed should be weak, the player should still feel tired and sluggish however more capable of escaping enemies/danger. To emphasise this the head bob effect should be increased. Sprinting should be extremely disorienting to prevent the player from wanting to do it constantly. Player can sprint by holding down the shift key.

In addition, players have the ability to hide within certain environment elements such as wardrobes, cardboard boxes or bins. This is useful for hide and seek sequences where we want players to feel the thrill of being prey in a hunt. This prevents them

from being caught by the enemy during scripted sequences. These environment elements will only be present during hide and seek sequences to prevent player confusion, placing one in an environment where it is not needed could slow the player down and affect pacing greatly.

Environment interaction mechanics:

Environment interaction is a major aspect of the players mechanics. This enables players to interact with and effect the environment. Objects that can be interacted with will be shown through the appearance of an icon just above the object. Upon clicking the E or left mouse button the player can interact with the object. Depending on the objects type it will interact with the player differently.

Critical objects:

Key objects like the symbolic objects will trigger events once interacted with such as the trauma cutscenes, audio and flashing imagery. If the critical object does not have a trigger or event tied to it the object will enter the players backend inventory (they cannot access it), this is true for objects such as keys/items essential to puzzles. The game will keep track of what critical objects the player has picked up within their backend inventory to allow them to progress.

Rest objects:

Rest objects are visualized as mirrors in our game linking to our themes of depersonalization and their consistent usage in the environment. Alongside the mirrors mechanical properties, they provide players with a chance to breathe and relax in-between intense puzzles or set pieces, to further this experience goal of relaxation a soothing “human” sounding audio track should be played similar to the examples here:

Nameless song, Dark Souls - [Nameless Song](#)

[*The end of the battle, Shadow of the Colossus - .\[High Quality\] Shadow of the Colossus OST 09 - The End of the Battle*](#)

These mirrors act as checkpoints and saving stations allowing the player to save their current progress. This also ensures that if the player triggers a fail state, they have a respawn point in which they can be spawned and the world can be reset.

Upon interacting with this rest object the player will look into the mirror, spawning a UI interface prompting the player to save, access their inventory, quit or rest and set this mirror as the checkpoint. This UI should be translucent allowing the player to constantly see their reflection in the mirror. Furthermore, these mirrors should appear far cleaner and uncluttered compared to other mirrors found within the environment so that these more important and functional mirrors stand out more clearly but also further our themes of depersonalization through providing the player with a place where they can finally see their reflection unclouded by debris and stains.

Miscellaneous objects:

Miscellaneous objects are those scattered around the environment, they serve no direct purpose to the player however they aid in making the environment feel more alive. These objects can also be used to scare players. Some examples of this object type include TV screens, toys, globes, light switches etc.

Doors:

Doors are another environment object players can interact with. We approach door interaction more realistically, aiming to have the door hinge and slowly open for the player in a similar way to games such as resident evil 7. The player should be able to interact with the door using the E key with it opening slightly and then a little more, this helps increase the tension and stress players feel as they are not immediately shown what is within the room. This system works well with the automatic depth of field system which allows players to focus on what is shown between the small doorway crack whilst blurring the rest. In addition, doors should shut behind the player for two reasons. One so that we can load and change aspects of the level and

two, so that the tension and horror of the experience is increased through the players now lack of an easy escape route. Importantly, the doors should still be openable, they are not all valves. To signal to players which doors are locked and which aren't we use our UI interaction icons, if the interaction icon does not switch to the interact available version then the door is locked, to further signal the door is locked a locked door sound effect should play if the player attempts to interact with it.

Mirrors:

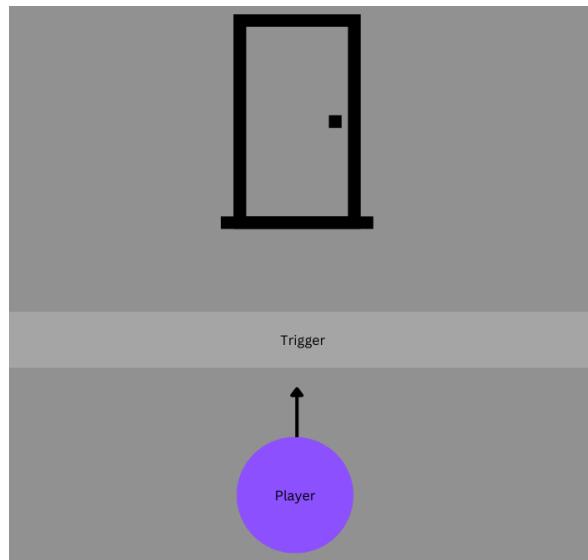
We utilise two different types of mirrors across our experience to further our narrative and its presence in gameplay. The first type of mirror we use is a menu mirror. These menu mirrors can be interacted with allowing the player to pause the game and take refuge in the safe environment, relaxing ambient music will also be playing whilst the player is within this menu emphasising its relaxing effects. Alongside relaxation, the menu mirror provides players with a way to set their checkpoint and access the pause menu, enabling them to return back to the main menu.

The second type of mirror we use can be found more consistently across the environment. This interaction object is simply a normal mirror in which the player interacts with passively by looking into it. Each time the player looks into this type of mirror their model will randomly switch to 1 of 6 player models. We do this to further our themes and firmly lodge them into gameplay but also the players mind. Due to the prominence of the mirrors players will often see that their model has changed from last time, prompting the player to question who they actually are and whether they recognize themselves linking directly to the main theme of depersonalization through provoking player emotion and attention to detail, leading to the theme being more impactful and resonant.

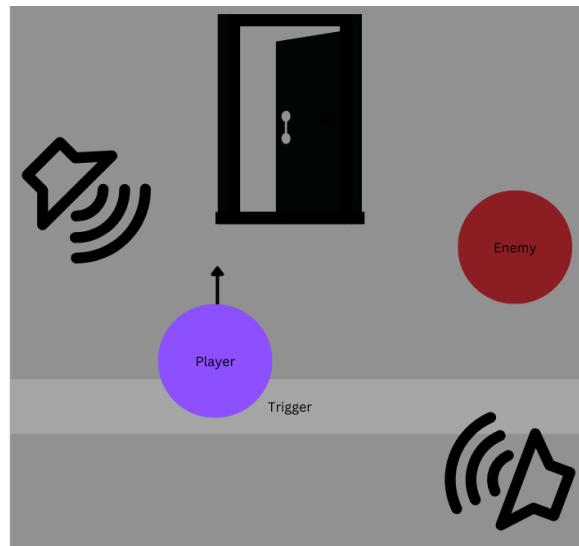
Notes:

The notes are the final interactable object. Upon interacting with these the player will be prompted with a UI showing what is written on the note, this enables the player to read it gaining insight on the character backstory, environment or hints to puzzle

solutions. These notes cannot be stored within the players inventory, the player must go back to their location to read them. This enables puzzles to be based around memory using the notes whilst also rewarding players who explore environments with a secret note. Furthermore, this prevents player distractions in the future preventing them from attempting to use a puzzle note to solve a puzzle in a different area.

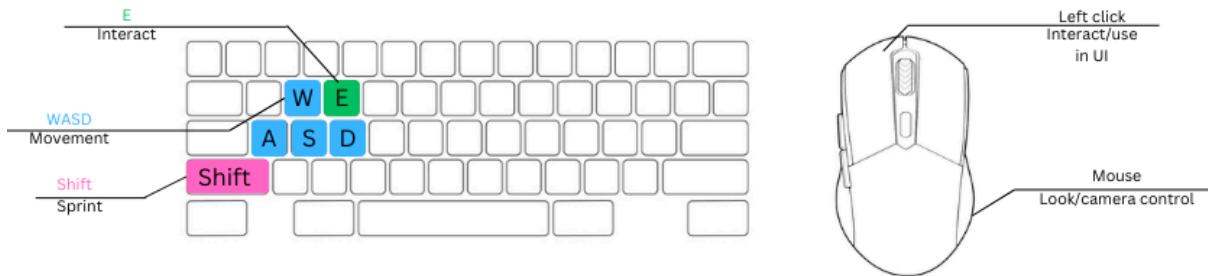


Creating horror and atmosphere: player unknowingly walking towards a trigger



Creating horror and atmosphere: player enters trigger which could cause events to happen, audio to play, changes to music, enemy to appear, objects to spawn, despawn or do something etc.

Controls:



Player progression:

Player progress through the game and its narrative by collecting a symbolic/traumatic object at the end of each level, this will allow players to finish the game with the final level requiring all four objects. This also provides the player with a sense of progression as they gradually defeat each object and notice the amount of objects they have collected increasing.

Players' skills progress throughout the duration of the game as they get better at interacting with the various mechanics. Players should find it easier to move around, solve puzzles and understand game rules and what is interactable and what is not simply by playing.

Player progression is also shown through level and puzzle design. As they work towards solving overarching environment puzzles the player should be shown and able to understand the progress they are making towards solving this overarching problem/puzzle through the environment and its design. For example, if a door at the beginning of a level cannot be unlocked until the player returns later with a key, that signals and provides a reward and sense of progression for the player, the previous obstacle they were introduced to has been overcome.

As the player progresses through the game, the intensity, difficulty and pacing should all increase; this should be done through harder puzzles and surreal segments, more enemy encounters which could be more unforgiving or longer. Similarly, the colour red should be shown more alongside these changes to emphasise the changes and provide the player with some feedback and warning via our primary visual language colour/element.

All of the prior progression elements all coincide with the games linear level structure with each of these elements increasing as the player continues and gets further into the game

User skills:

Alongside basic mechanical and 3D navigation skills, we test the player on the skills below throughout the experience within different avenues of our levels.

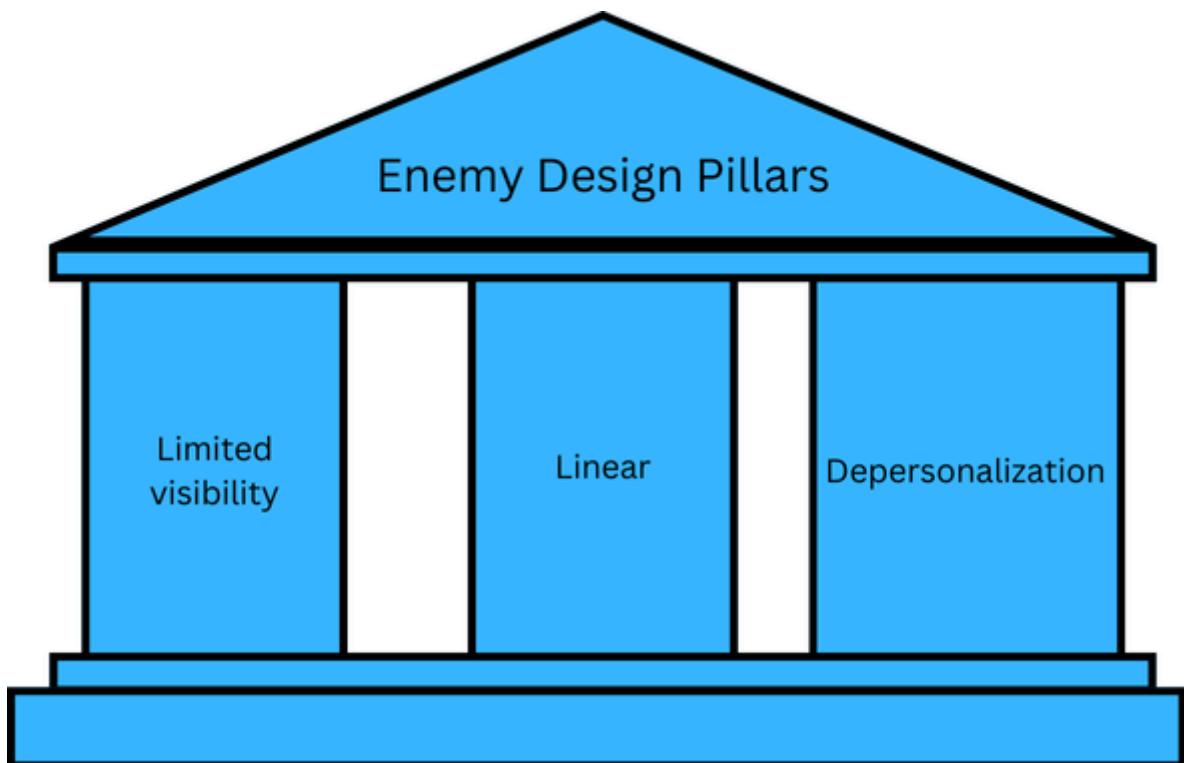
- Problem-solving skills
- Creative thinking skills
- Spatial awareness/navigational ability skills
- Memorization

Enemy Design:

Design Philosophy:

The main design philosophy behind our enemy is to keep the player tense, constantly feeling as though they are being stalked by it through its placement in the environment. Furthermore, the enemy should challenge the player during the scripted encounter sequences providing players with a sense of tangible danger, releasing the tension built up. The enemy's design being contradictory to the player's restrictive design adds to the fear factor as the enemy is more threatening as the player feels defenceless and trapped. Much like other elements of the project the enemy should reflect our theme of depersonalization through its design, visuals and sound effects furthering our design by subtraction philosophy.

Design Pillars:



Player and enemy interactions:

The enemy interactions within the game are mainly indirect and used for tension building. This allows us to provoke an uncomfortable feeling within players as they become aware consciously or not that they are being stalked/followed by something. Having the enemy be so scripted allows for the designer to get creative with how they scare the player alongside giving them more control over what experience they create for players.

This lack of direct interaction also links to our themes of DDD, many who suffer with it do not recognise themselves and/or feel as though they are watching themselves from afar which links directly to how we use our enemy within the environment. Instances and examples of the type of interactions our player and enemy will have can be found below:

Mirrors:

The enemy will only be visible to players when it passes in front of or nearby a mirror meaning it is completely invisible to the player for most of the experience. This helps us and should be used as a way to build tension as the player is never fully aware of where the enemy is creating some unpredictability and furthering the stalking aspect. On top of this, only being able to see the enemy briefly and from a restricted POV allows us to build tension further through the restriction, players are never given a full or continuous picture of the enemy leveraging the players imagination to create and emphasise tension and horror.

Furthermore, by keeping the mirrors static and in predetermined places players are only able to seek refuge in specific areas of the level. This aids in building tension as

it causes environments not reflected in a mirror to feel far more dangerous for players, aiding and emphasising the uncomfortableness of the game.

Restricted interactions:

Alongside the visibility of the enemy being limited, we want our player to feel threatened by it. We achieve this by giving the player no way to fight the enemy or come out on top. This keeps them fearful as they can't fight or attack them which adds to the enemies mysterious and omnipotent status. Restricting how the player interacts with the enemy will make the player subconsciously fear the enemy and in turn build more tension when we make them think they are around.

Enemy sightings:

Taking inspiration from the G-Man from the Half Life, we want our enemy to be shrouded in mystery and creep the player out throughout the game. We achieve this by setting up triggers in the levels which when activated, will trigger an enemy sighting in a mirror. These sightings help further increase the stalking feeling players get from the enemy and keep them reminded that they are always being watched from afar.

Alongside enemy appearances, we will use other classical horror techniques to build tension and make the player uncomfortable through avenues such as camera effects music increasing tempo or changing (mickey mousing), loud sound effects playing at unexpected times, events based around objects in the world to occur such as doors slamming shut, or a pipe breaking and particle effects spawning. These small micro horror effects should help to build tension ahead of the main enemy sighting/encounter to help heighten the horror of that moment.

Enemy frequency and the colour red:

Another way that the enemy and player interact is through the usage of our symbolic colour, red. Red is used to establish and visualise the degrading mental health and DPDR of Daisy through environment art. However, red also serves as an indicator to

the player that they are likely to encounter the enemy more frequently. This slight visual language indication ensures that players are adequately warned of the coming danger whilst also allowing us to build tension and visualise our narrative through the environment. Enemy scripted sequences like chases, mirror sightings or hide and seek will also be increased aiding in making the enemy feel more threatening.

The two should be directly proportional, where red increases so does the enemy frequency. This rule should not be broken as it could create an experience that feels inconsistent with information being poorly converted to players.

Scripted Enemy Sequences:

The enemy encounters in the game are extremely scripted and linear. This scripting allows us to provide a specific and coherent gameplay experience whilst also enabling us to control the games pacing, an element that is extremely important to horror media. This control is important as it helps us make an experience that is higher quality and less variable, ensuring players have the experience we intend and are exposed to our narrative. Utilising scripted segments is also an important technical decision we made, developing a reactive and complex enemy AI that would accurately provide the specific experience we want is vastly out of scope for this project alongside the pacing and balancing issues an enemy AI poses. On top of this, much of our research and pre production work was directed towards scripting being a better solution to the problems that the enemy posed with many of our inspirations for the project employing a similar approach.

In our levels we plan for the player to encounter the enemy through the aforementioned sightings, but we also want to implement a series of gameplay heavy sequences that act as a crescendo for the tension we have been building up until that point. These could include a hide and seek segment, a chase sequence, a sequence when we force the player to be caught by (or lose to) the enemy to progress the game. These segments will be high intensity, loud and offer a gameplay/mechanical based challenge for the player offering a break from the

challenge and skills that the puzzles require, testing players in different avenues and providing a more engaging and diverse experience.

Enemy based fail states:

How does the player trigger a fail state:

- After being found during hide and seek gameplay segments
- After getting caught in a chase sequence
- Failing to escape the enemy or complete a specific task during an encounter sequence
- Only the enemy can trigger a player fail state through specific gameplay segments. The player should be unable to trigger a fail state on their own. For example, they cannot fall to death.

What happens when the player hits a fail state:

- During specific segments of the game a fail state could be scripted to trigger another event or gameplay sequence, using the fail state as a transition
 - When the player hits a normal fail state they should be respawned at the last mirror they looked into or to the beginning of the segment they just failed, the visualization of this fail state is still to be determined
-

Enemy background/visual design:

The enemy in our game is a piece of Daisy that she has repressed and no longer recognises due to their worsening DDD helping further our themes into the enemy's design. They should appear as being identical to the players model however with a misty, shadowy and undefined appearance removing any noticeable features save for their silhouette again furthering our themes through the players inability to recognise/see the enemy clearly. The player should understand that the enemy is

them through the silhouette, this is essential in demonstrating our themes but also in creating a tense and threatening enemy that feels surreal and otherworldly.



Enemy should appear similar to the shadow creatures from SOTC



Missing facial features, but with just one pronounced can also achieve the effect of uncanny valley



Girl with no facial features plays on the players natural fear of the uncanny valley theory

Audio/sound effects linked to enemy:

Audio is an essential aspect of the enemy that we use extensively throughout the game to heighten uncomfortability and tension. Furthermore, we use certain audio effects to signal events and gameplay states to the player. The audio and effects below are utilised in our game:

Chase music:

The chase music can be listened to below. This track is purposefully intense, loud to help disorient the player and create a more terrifying and impactful sequence. The music we chose also has a consistent simulating the players heartbeat and providing them with something to subconsciously listen to. The beating consistency makes the player feel as though it is leading up to something helping increase anxiety and anticipation in the player.

Foley SFX:

We use the exact same foley SFX for both the enemy and the player. This is purposeful as it helps us disorient and confuse the player when they hear another set of footsteps that sound identical to their own. This can lead to suspenseful

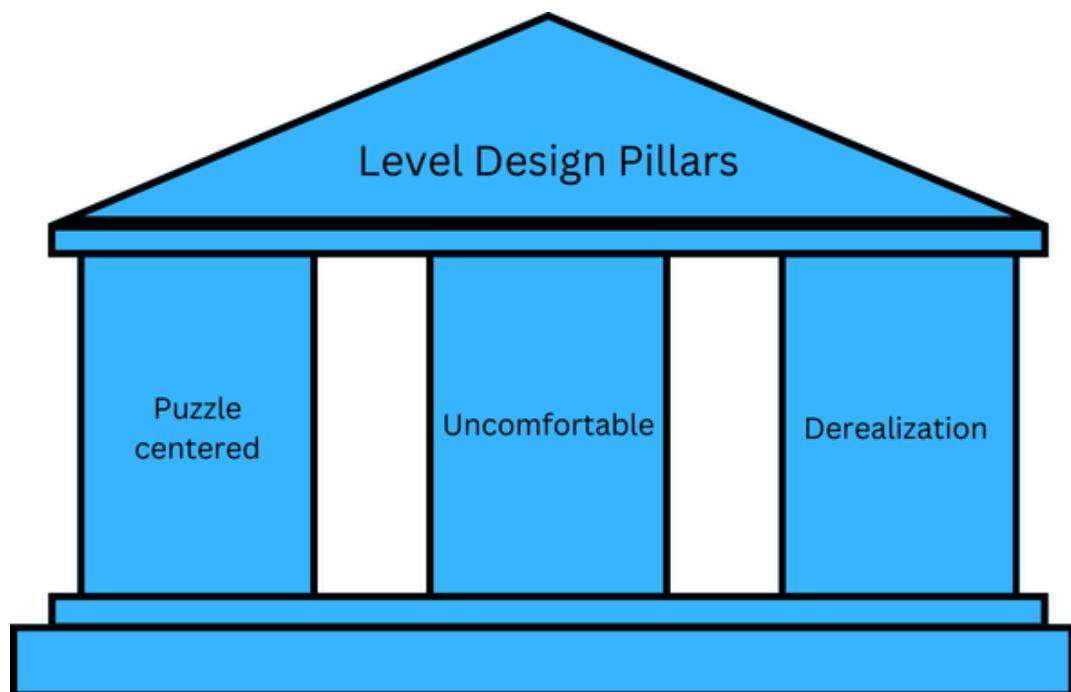
moments where the player can hear something that they think is themself before pausing and realising it is actually the enemy following or walking by them. This usage of the same foley sound effects also ensures that our technical and asset scope stays low, ensuring we do not need to make another blueprint or more sound effects for the enemy.

Overall Level Design:

Design Philosophy:

Our main goal/philosophy regarding level design is to reflect and emphasise player emotions through the environment. Levels should always work towards achieving/emphasising the feelings stated within the experience goal. For example, if a level has the goal of scaring the player the level design should reflect this by placing them in restrictive environments that generally move downwards. In order to stay consistent with our overall game design approach, the level design should link to our overall theme of DDD through the layouts we create. Level design is the main way that we can explore our theme of derealization through the impossible and surreal nature of the environment as well as the stories we tell through it. Keeping in order with our overall design by subtraction philosophy, any part of the level that does not serve a purpose in emphasising the themes should be changed or cut.

Design Pillars:



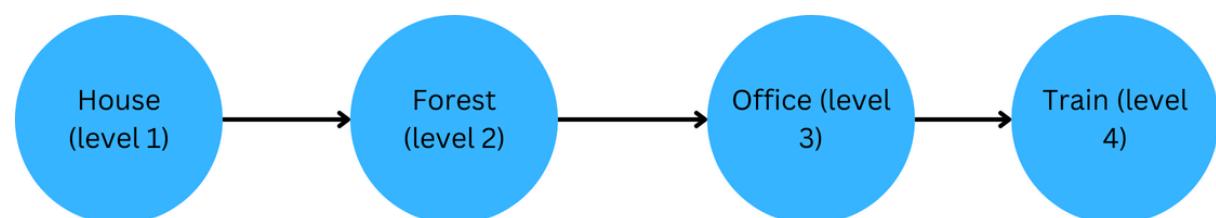
Puzzle Design:

In each level we should aim to have one overarching puzzle which the player should be thinking about solving from the start. However we place challenges, secondary puzzles and set pieces in the way which must be completed before they can solve the main puzzle of the level. We want players to need to think about the overarching puzzle consistently across the level to add additional challenge in the way that the player thinks about the environment and their goal in relation to it, making the environment feel more interactive and allowing us to heighten challenge difficulty once the surreal/derealization sequences begin to occur, linking the environments and the way the player experiences them to our overall themes of DPDR and disorientation.

It is very important that we find the right balance of simple mechanics but difficult to solve puzzles. This is a tough goal to achieve and so extra design and development time should be spent creating these puzzles, they should form the basis of each level with the rest of the environment being designed around it.

Puzzles should be varied across your level and we must try to add a variety of puzzle types to prevent the goal from feeling predictable and generic throughout each level. For example , there should not be a level comprised of lock and key puzzles but rather a variety of puzzles which test the players skills in multiple ways.

Critical path:



The Me In The Mirror is a linear horror experience, therefore its critical path is also just as linear and straight forward. We do this in order to provide a curated and specific experience that helps us expand upon and continue our narrative across the levels whilst also keeping pacing intensity consistent.

Tools:

[Flowchart Maker & Online Diagram Software](#) for drawing levels:

`noclip` to noclip through games levels to get inspiration

[The Level Design Book | The Level Design Book](#) Will help provide structure to the level design process

The House Level Design:

Pre production:

Location:

Daisy's house

Asset table:

All important mechanics or assets used within the level can be found documented here -

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DOn0unPNY8HEkx2sGdaPNGO_3R3wSjPdbxDs6YBSOlo/edit?usp=sharing

Mechanics list:

Movement

- Walk
- Sprint
- Discrete/hidden teleportation

Environment

- Normal mirrors
- Menu/checkpoint mirrors
- Critical object interaction
- Note interaction
- Miscellaneous object interaction
- Hallway flipping
- House layout switching (teleportation)
- Trauma object interaction

Narrative link/story of level:

- Should establish that the player is 1 year ahead. Daisy's abuser has moved out of the house, she now lives alone.
- The intro of the level should establish that the player is Daisy as well as giving them a look at Daisy's appearance through the mirror on the wall. This is important as it will form the basis of who the player thinks they are which we later challenge through changes to their appearance in the mirror.
- Player needs to beat the first trauma object, giving them an insight into Daisy's crumbling mental health and the effect her abusive relationship has had.
- Player should be shown the effects of the relationship through notes as well as the through the environment in aspects such as props and the usage of red throughout it.
- Players should also be slowly introduced to the enemy of the game. At first this enemy should appear to stalk the player, appearing for short periods just out of view. As the level progresses the enemy should become more permanent and aggressive to further demonstrate how Daisy's DDD/mental health is getting worse.

Experience goals:

In this level the player should:

- Defeat first trauma object
- Feel tense, uncomfortable and restricted through the environment, its puzzles and the enemy sightings/events. Players should feel as though they cannot make sense of the environment and as though they are being stalked by something.
- Be taught the basic movement and environment interaction controls
- Be shown who they are and then have that belief challenged and subverted
- Be introduced to the enemy and how they work

Player primary and secondary goals (what do players need to do):

- Find a way to smash bedroom window
- Get ready for work (brush teeth, get bag, get ID)
- Get storage key
- Get hammer from storage room (allows player to smash bedroom window)
- Defeat trauma object

Length estimates:

Critical path - 10 minutes

Golden path - 13 minutes

Average/first playthrough - 20 minutes

Set pieces:

- Infinite staircase preventing player from going downstairs until a condition is met
 - Enemy chase sequence
 - Bedroom window smash and subsequent staircase into the void
 - Trauma sequence
-

Trauma Sequence:

The trauma sequences are present in all 4 levels. In this level the trauma object will be found at the end providing players with one final obstacle to overcome before they are able to finish the level. The trauma object will appear as a breathing red cube linking to our usage of red to symbolise Daisy's mental state but also to contrast the rest of the environment, standing out and encouraging players to interact with it. The player will need to interact with the object 3 times with each interaction delving deeper into Daisy's repressed trauma and declining mental health. The third interaction should be the most intense however once it is over the player and the environment should return to normal, this return to normality should be instant with players going from the high intensity traumma sequence into an extremely low intensity silence to help break up the games pacing and provide contrast.

This trauma sequence and others in the game are heavily inspired by similar scenes in Neon Genesis Evangelion with one such example being linked here: [Asuka](#)

Confronts Arael

The trauma sequences are shown in game through the usage of a UI widget. This widget will play the trauma sequence video over the player's view. Upon the video's end, the widget will be deleted and the player should be teleported to a different environment. This environment should be less detailed/regressing through the stages of level design with the player going from a 3D environment with art in it, to a blockout and finally to a wireframe environment. This brings the themes of mental decline into gameplay ensuring that the player can feel and interact with the consequences of the trauma video/sequence through the environment around them.



Image taken from Evangelion Episode 23: Tears, this acted as inspiration for the trauma sequences and their presentation within the house level



Image taken from Evangelion episode 22: Staying Human, this acted as inspiration for the trauma sequences and their presentation within the house level



Image taken from Evangelion episode 22: Staying Human, this acted as inspiration for the trauma sequences and their presentation within the house level

The trauma sequences should capture the ethereal, confusing and uncomfortable nature of the same sequences in Evangelion and the images above. They should make the player feel as though reality has completely crumbled around them and they are in a distant imaginary, ethereal dimension that cannot exist and yet does. Channeling this cosmic and existential horror is the goal of this trauma sequence.

Before interaction:

Before the player interacts with the trauma object a few key things should happen

- Firstly, the player should traverse through the void staircase. This slow set piece allows us to gradually increase tension through the silence players will experience thus making the next two elements far more impactful on both the players emotions and the games pacing intensity.
- Secondly, the living room should be plunged into a darkness with the only lights visible being red. This red helps serve our theme whilst also adhering to our visual language, signalling to the player that things are about to get intense and dangerous. There should be a low intensity light coming from the roof that shines on the trauma object, this should guide the player towards it.
- Finally, there should be an extremely quiet screaming coming from the living room door with the screaming being the same as the one in the downstairs hallway of the house, linking the environments. This should guide the player towards the living room and trauma object whilst increasing the tension of this set piece. This screaming should get louder as the player gets closer to further increase tension.

First interaction:

Upon interacting with the trauma object for the first time the video below should be triggered. This video is the first trauma sequence. Whilst this video is playing the player should be teleported to the next environment meaning that upon finishing the video they are already there, preventing any disorienting camera movements linked to teleporting. The environment players are teleported to should be the blockout version of the living room/prior environment.

Interaction Video 1:

 Sequence 1.mp4

Second interaction:

Upon interacting with the second trauma object a similar sequence/video should play. This video can be found below. Much like the prior sequence players should be teleported to the next environment whilst the video is covering their viewport. The environment they are teleported to this time should be a wireframe version of the prior two in order to show the degrade in Daisy's mental health through gameplay and the environment.

Interaction Video 2:

 Sequence 2.mp4

Third interaction:

Finally, upon interacting with the object for the third time the player should be shown the most intense video of the three sequences. This should make the player feel

maximum discomfort before we decrease the intensity and allow the player to end the game. As with the prior sequences, when the player is watching this video they should be teleported to the final environment, this final environment should be the same as the first. The original living room with environment art within. The only difference between this last environment and the first is in the absence of the trauma object and the bright white lighting that should now be present. Once this sequence has ended the player will be able to finish the level by walking out of the living room

Interaction Video 3:

 Sequence 3.mp4

Puzzle design:

Bedroom/tutorial puzzle:

This should teach the player the basic of environment interaction and character movement. This puzzle should be simple and easy to solve requiring players to open one of the characters drawers to find a key, this key then allows them to unlock the bedroom door thus teaching them how to interact with the environment and the visual language we use to signal what is interactable and what is not. Importantly, the player should be shown Daisy's schedule/the players objective list, forming the premise and providing the goals for the completion of the next puzzle

Get ready for work puzzle:

This puzzle is structured similarly to the last one however the player will need to get/complete 3 actions spread across different rooms with these being the bathroom, study room and guest room. These 3 items and their locations appear on the schedule/objective list players are introduced to in the previous puzzle. After

completing these actions the player will be deemed “ready for work” and will be introduced to the games enemy in a scripted encounter. Once that encounter ends the player can then go down the stairs which are no longer infinite/hard gated.

The downstairs puzzle:

The kitchen will act as a hub room where player can switch between the default and DDD house configurations.

Default configuration:

Can Access:	Cannot Access:
Upstairs	Conservatory
Storage room	Connector room
Cinema	Tree area
Living Room	

DDD configuration:

Can Access:	Cannot Access:
Conservatory	Upstairs
Connector room	Storage room
Tree area	Cinema
	Living Room

Players need to use the teleport object in the kitchen to switch into the DDD house layout, here they must make their way to the conservatory where they will find a safe, the safe is locked via a 4 character code. It is the players objective to find the code, unlock the safe and use the key within to get into the storage room where they will find a hammer to smash the bedroom window

To do this players need to switch back and forth between the default and DDD house config. They can do this using the lever inside of the small connector room found within the DDD layout. Players need to switch layout and reach the tree area, here they will acquire the button to flip the environments of both configurations upside down. Players then need to flip the hallways and switch house configurations, allowing them to reach the cinema door which is above the front door in the normal configuration. After this they must complete the cinema puzzle to get the conservatory safe code. Players then switch the house configuration but do not flip the hallway thus allowing them to reach the safe. Upon inputting the correct code players will be rewarded with the storage room key. After this players need to flip the hallways back to normal and teleport to the normal house configuration to get the hammer from the storage room and finally smash the bedroom window.

The cinema puzzle:

The cinema puzzle is the last puzzle of the level, completing it allows the player to obtain the safe code thus allowing them to get the storage room key and eventually the hammer. The cinema puzzle (being the last one in the level) utilises the mirrors we have constantly been using throughout the environment, helping to create a feeling of progression whilst also spinning a new twist on how mirrors work within our game. To complete the cinema puzzle players will need to count the number of audience members in the mirror world with the first ones who appear forming the first number of the code sequence and so on. Players can only see the audience for a few seconds before they disappear and the sequence is reset meaning players will

need to count quickly and accurately before all 3 sequences end. The audience members are separated by colour and spawning sequence helping us limit player confusion. Once counting the player needs to input their guess into the safe, if correct the player will be rewarded with the cassette tape, placing this tape into the projector shows the player the code to the conservatory safe on the cinema screen, they will need to remember it whilst they make their way to the conservatory safe.

The overarching puzzle:

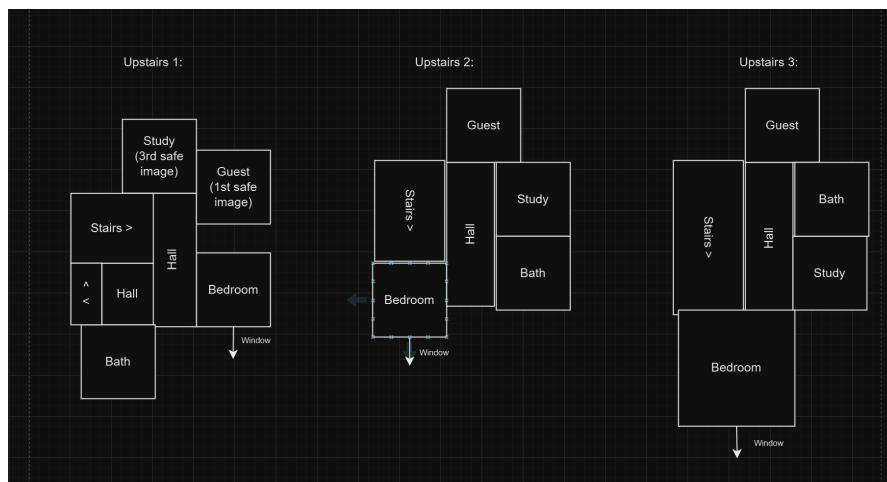
The overarching puzzle of the house level is the bedroom window. For the entire level it is the player's objective to smash the window, revealing the void and a way into the living room where the player will defeat the trauma object. In order to smash the bedroom window, players will need to complete all of the other puzzles first.

Level layouts and blockmesh:

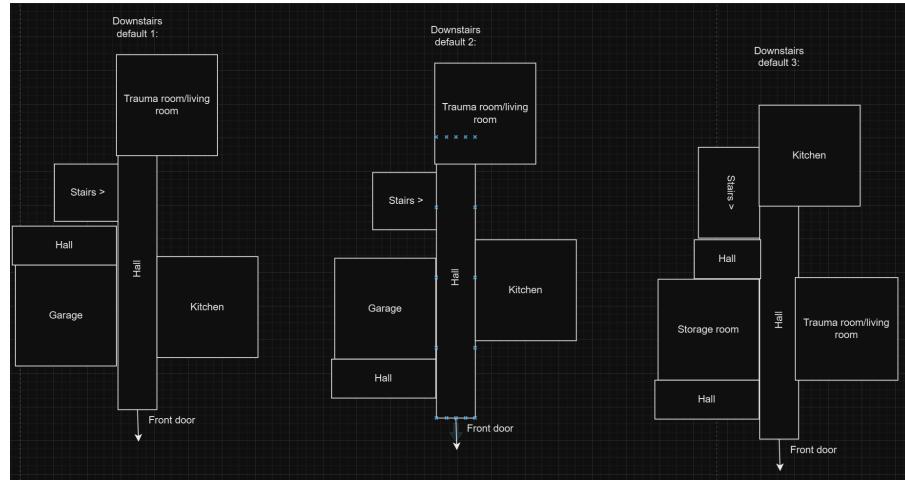
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-SvOfZfRpasO_CUXT13JdVctMnQMwkXi/view?usp=sharing - Level layouts can be downloaded here and accessed through [Draw.io](#)

Level layout images:

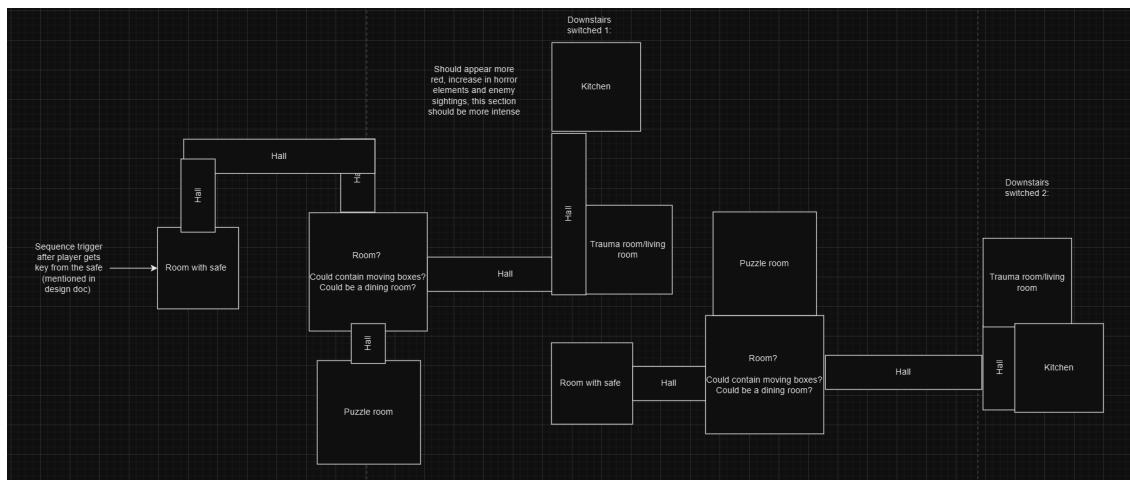
All level layout images can be found below:



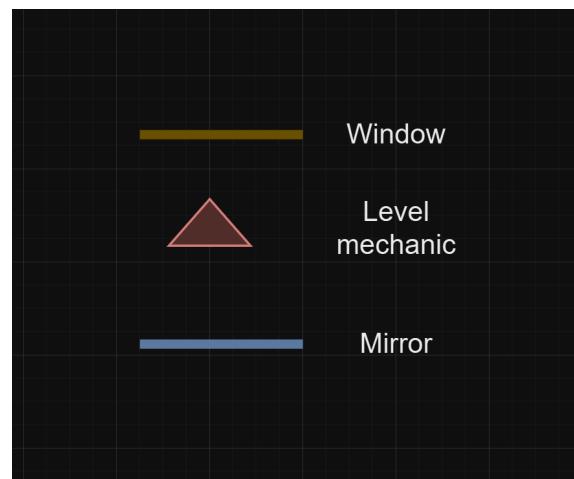
Upstairs bubble diagrams



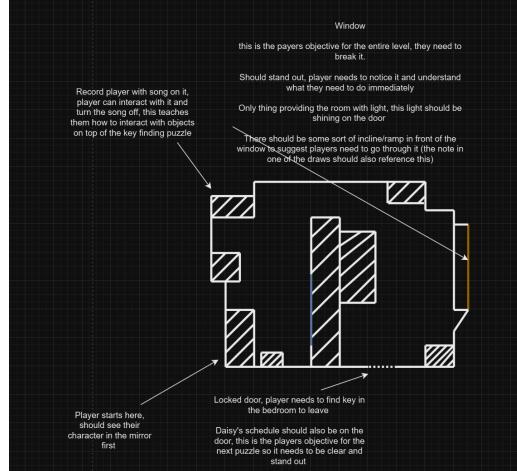
Downstairs bubble diagrams



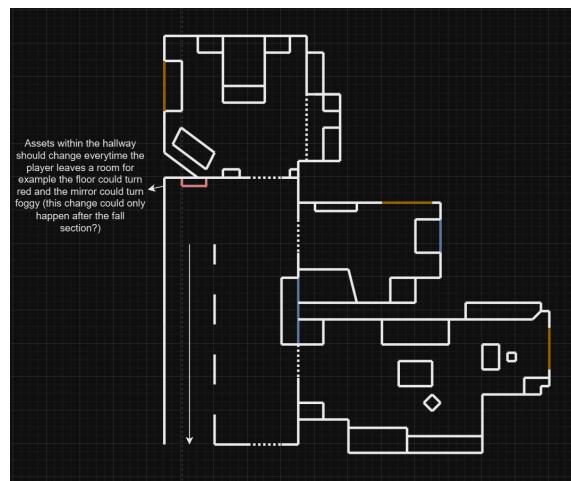
DDD world bubble diagrams



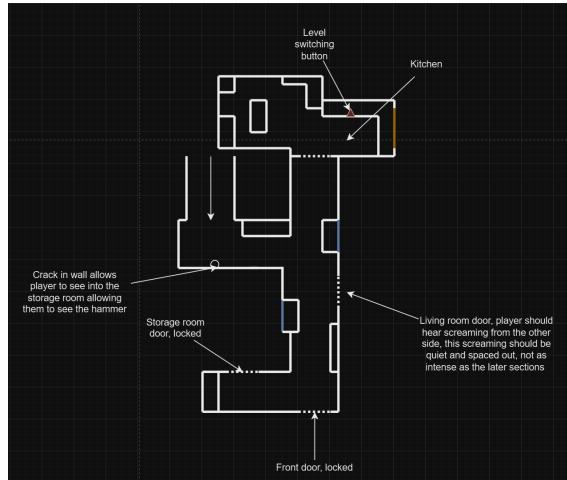
Layout element key



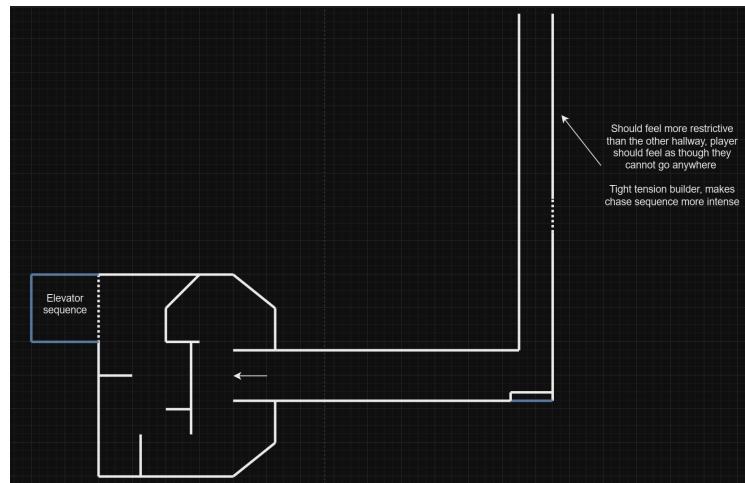
Bedroom layout



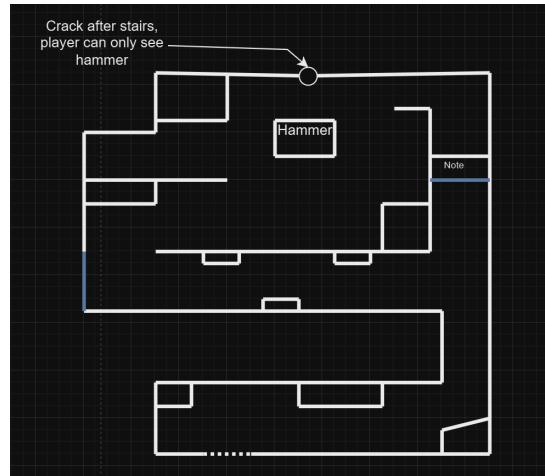
Upstairs hallway, stairs, study, bathroom and guest room layouts



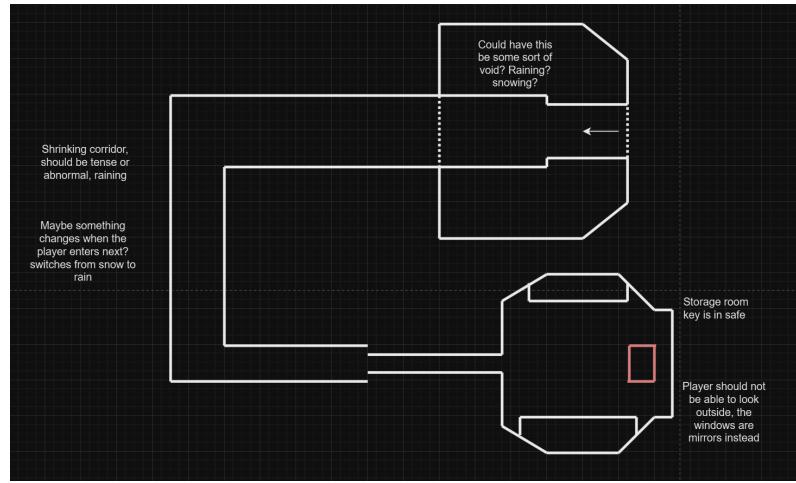
Kitchen, stairs and hallway



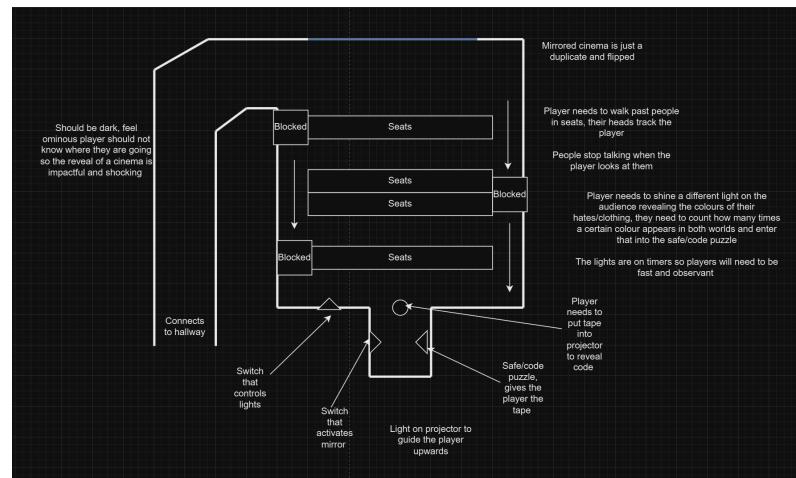
DDD world hallway and connector room not flipped



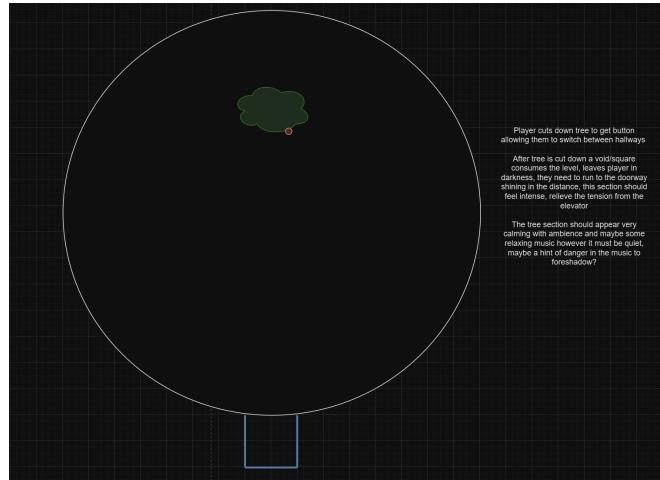
Storage room



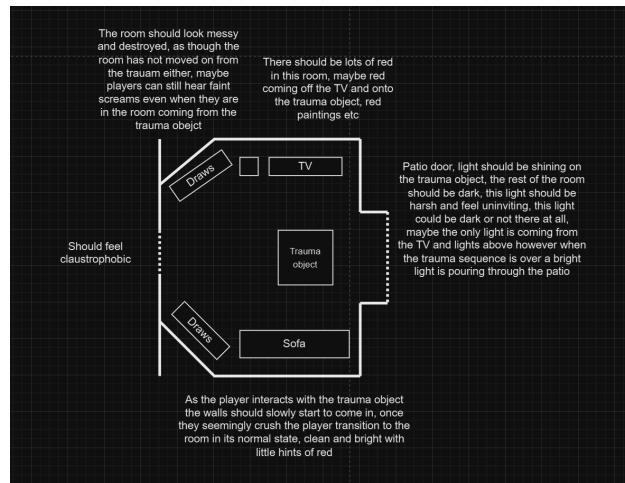
Connector room flipped and conservatory



Cinema room



Tree and hill layout



Living room layout

Blockout images:

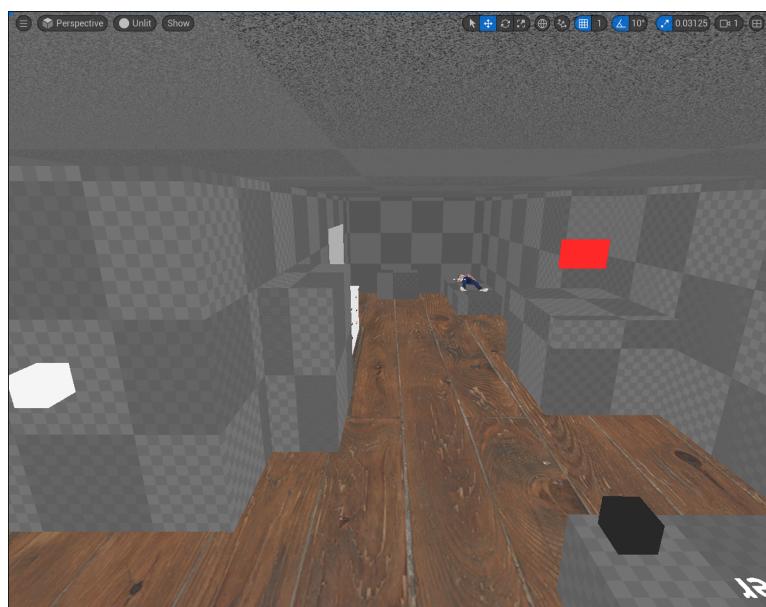
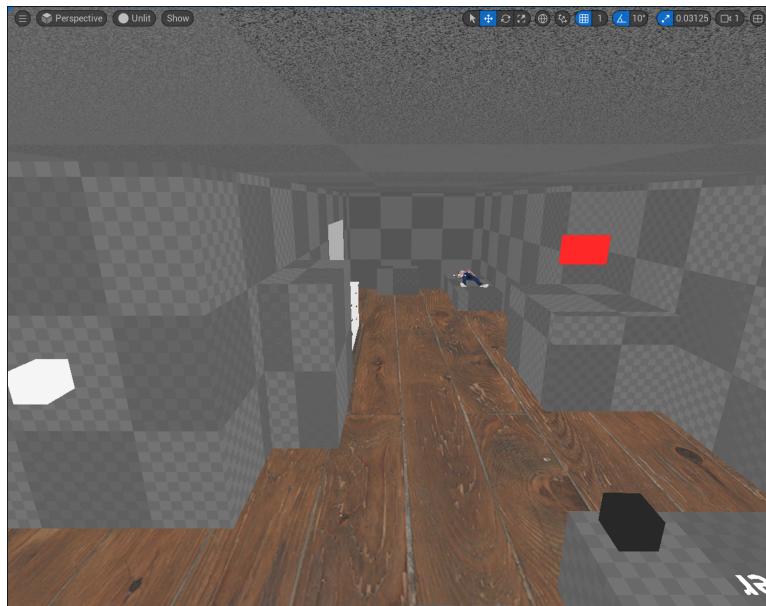
Many of the layout drawings were changed during the blackout/blockmesh phase in order to accommodate and improve level flow/gameplay. These images were taken with Unreals **unlit** function enabled, this helps us provide a more accurate and basic blockout image by ignoring elements such as lighting.

Key:

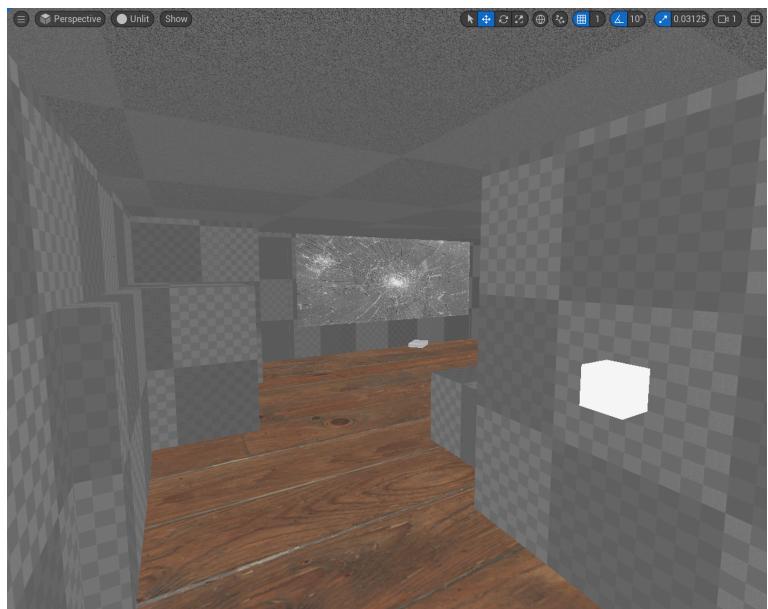
- **White/Green** - Mirror

- Cyan/Blue - Ceiling
- Purple - Floor

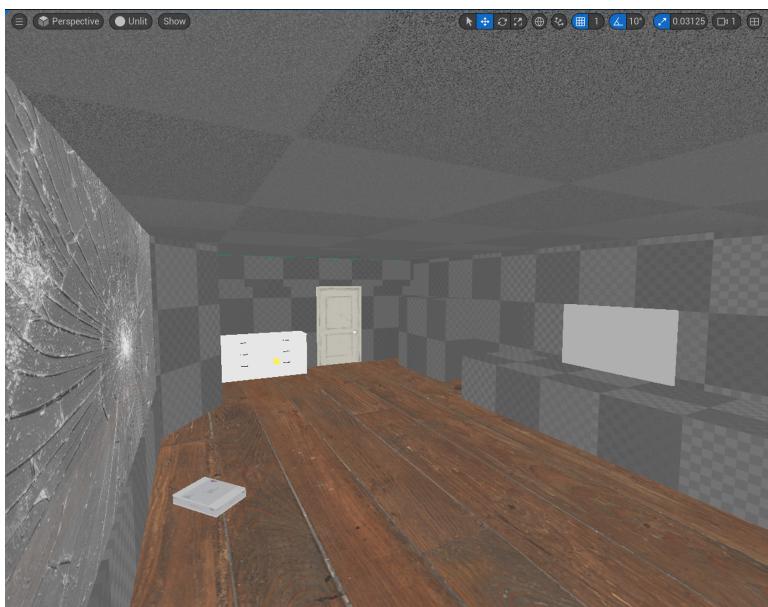
All of the blockout images can be found below:



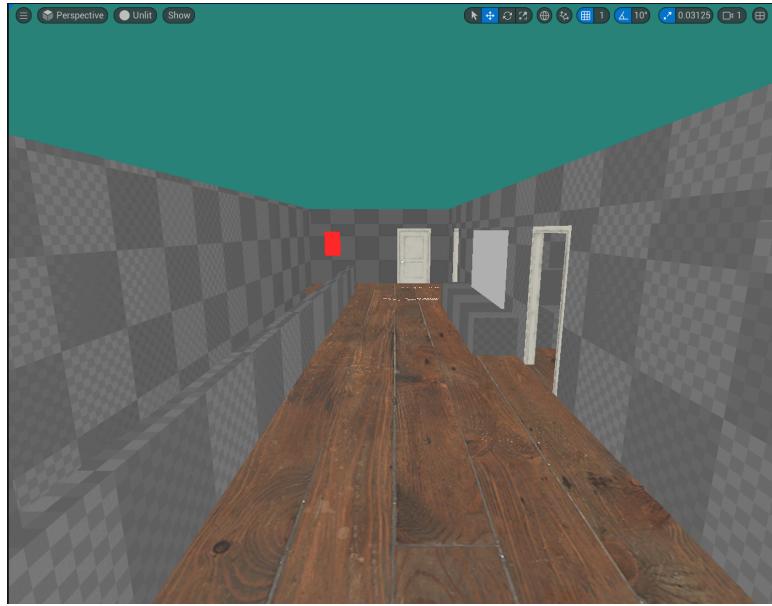
Bedroom image 2, shows the opposite end of where the player starts as well as the room divide and corner



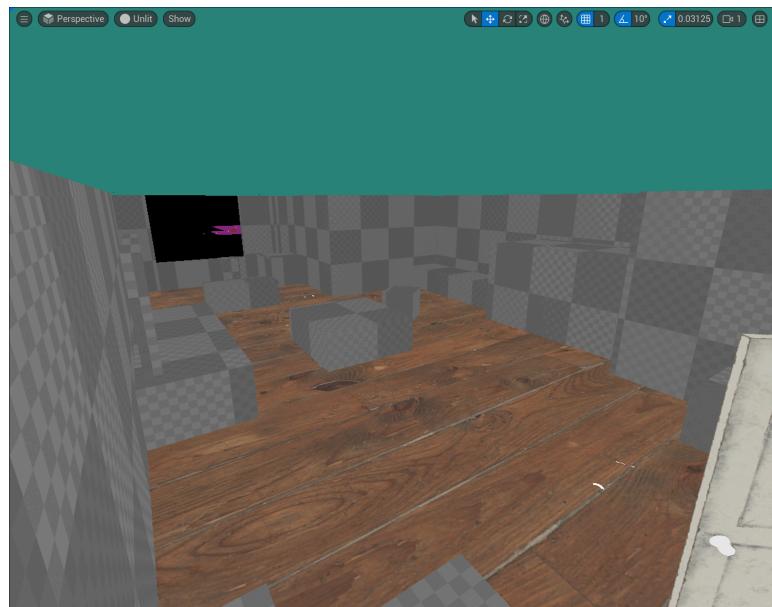
Bedroom image 3, taken whilst standing in corner, shows what the player will see upon turning the corner



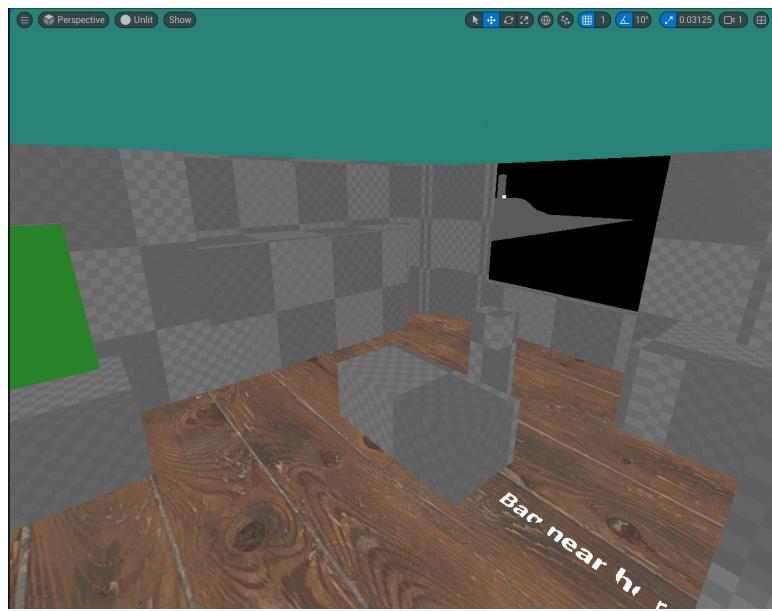
Bedroom image 4, shows the second half of the bedroom



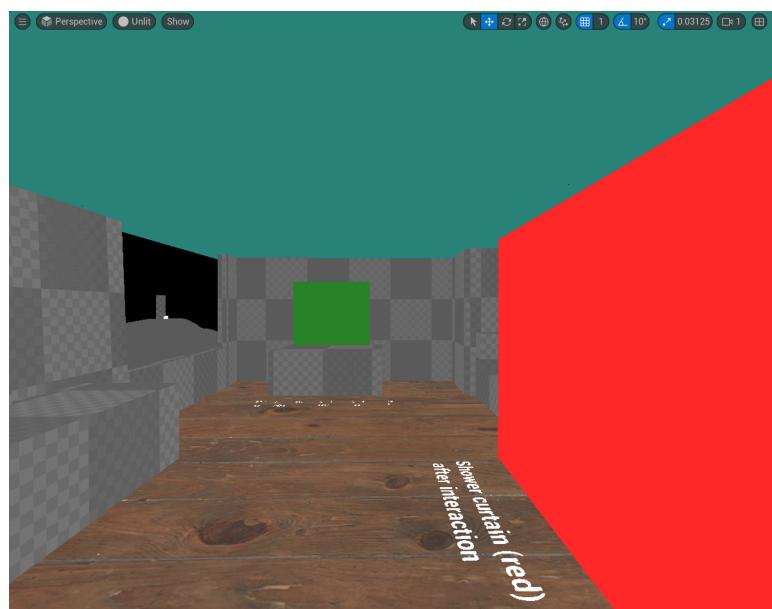
Upstairs hallway image 1, taken from bedroom door, this is what the player will see upon exiting



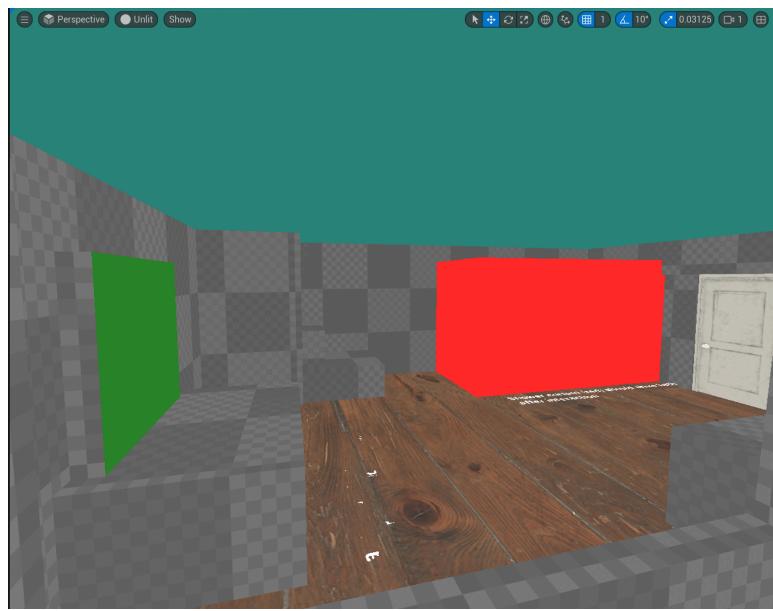
Study image 1



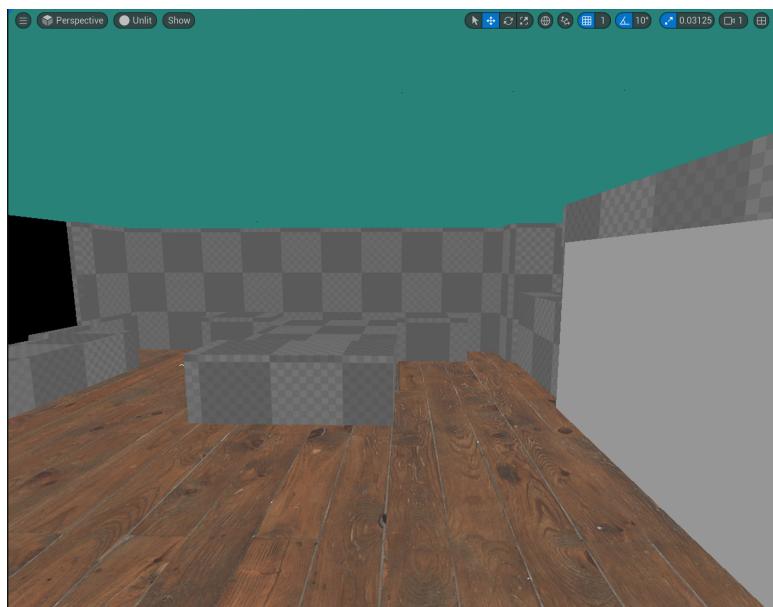
Study image 2, displays desk area



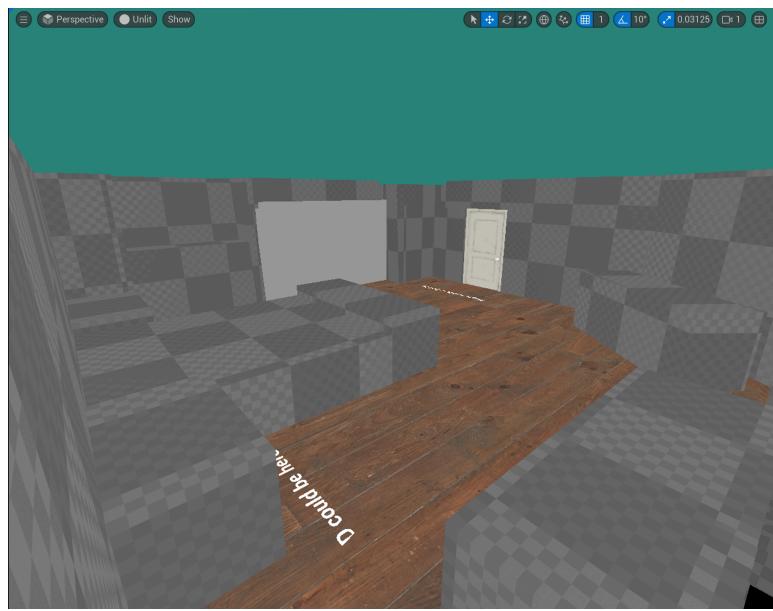
Bathroom image 1, taken from door/player entrance



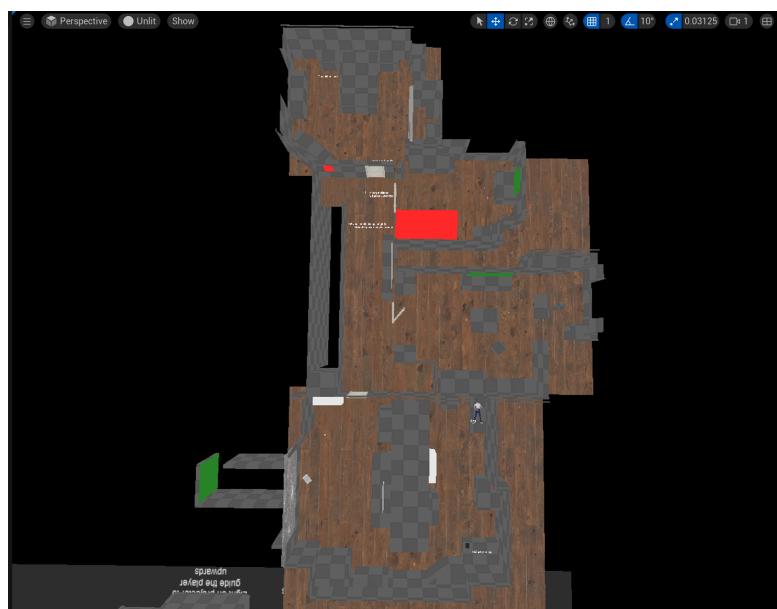
Bathroom image 2, taken from outside the window



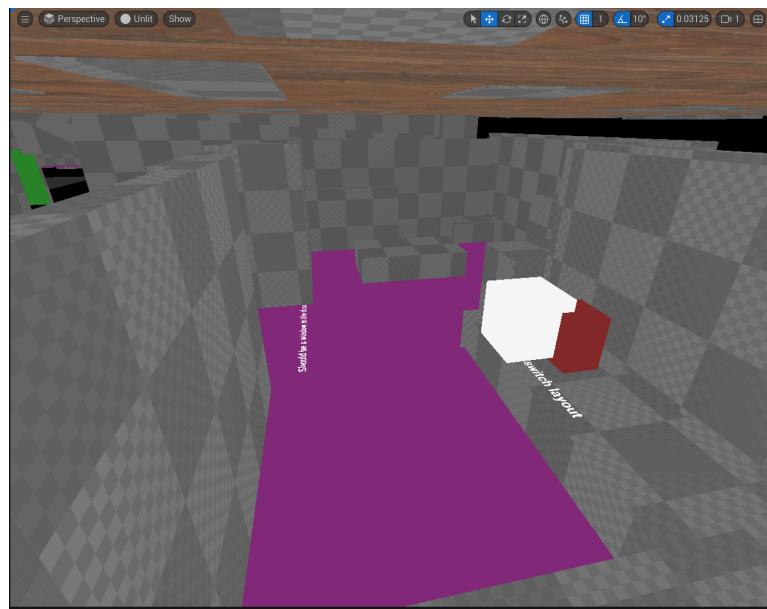
Guest room image 1, taken from door/player entrance



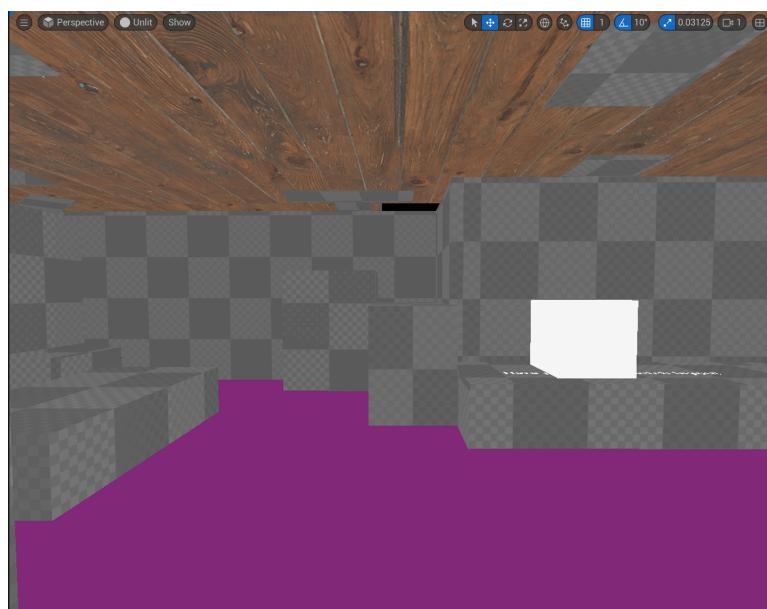
Guest room image 2, taken from near the window



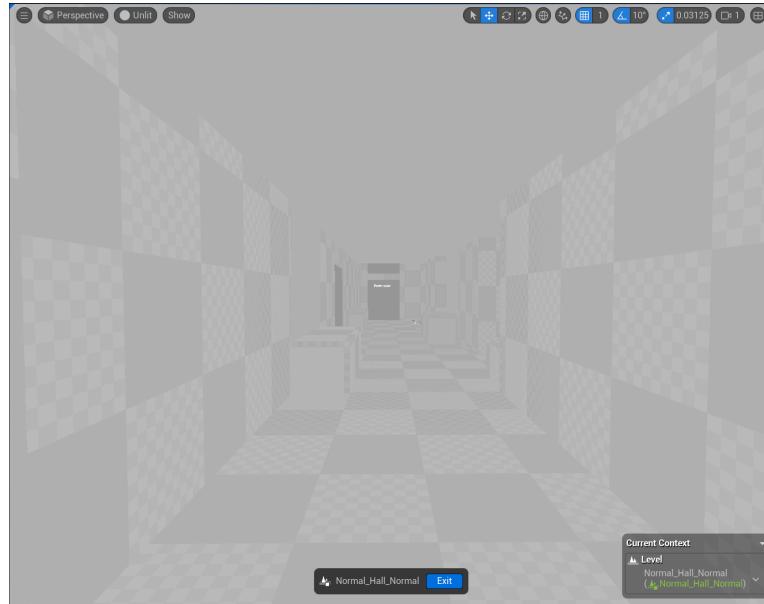
Entire upstairs blockout image (roof removed)



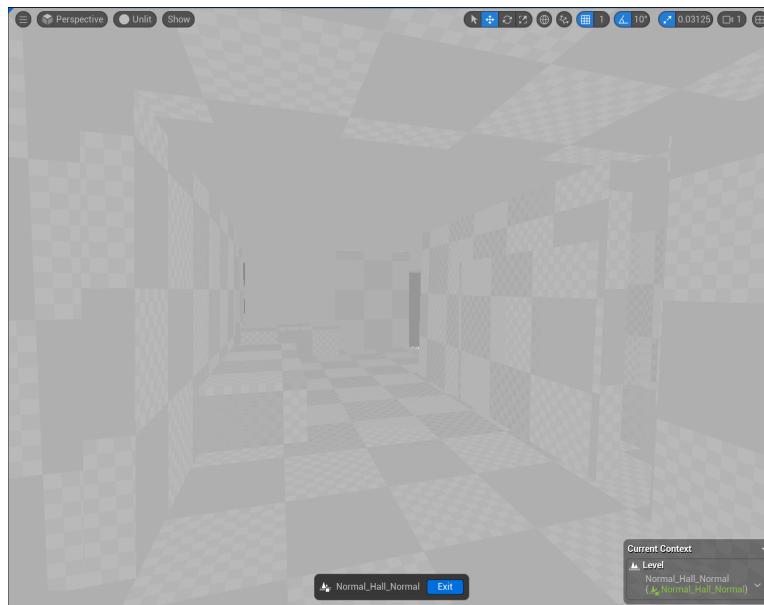
Kitchen image 1, taken from the window on the right



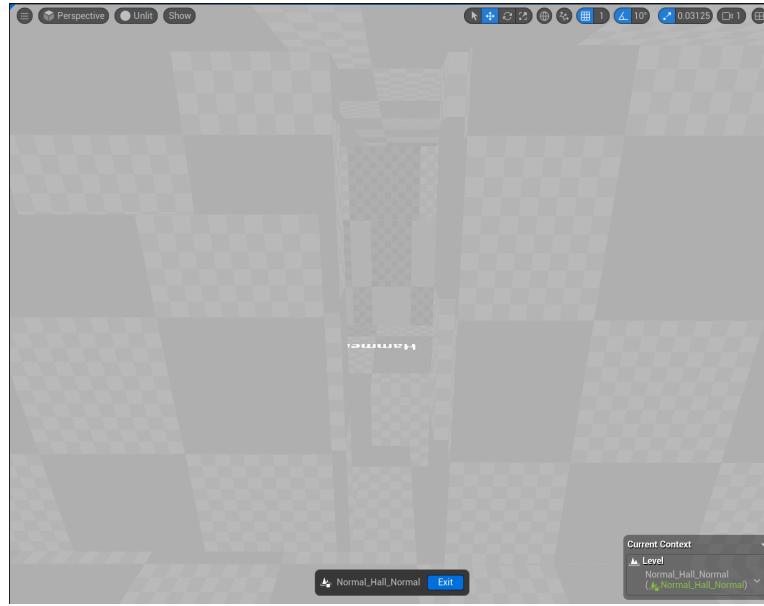
Kitchen image 2, taken from the door/player entrance



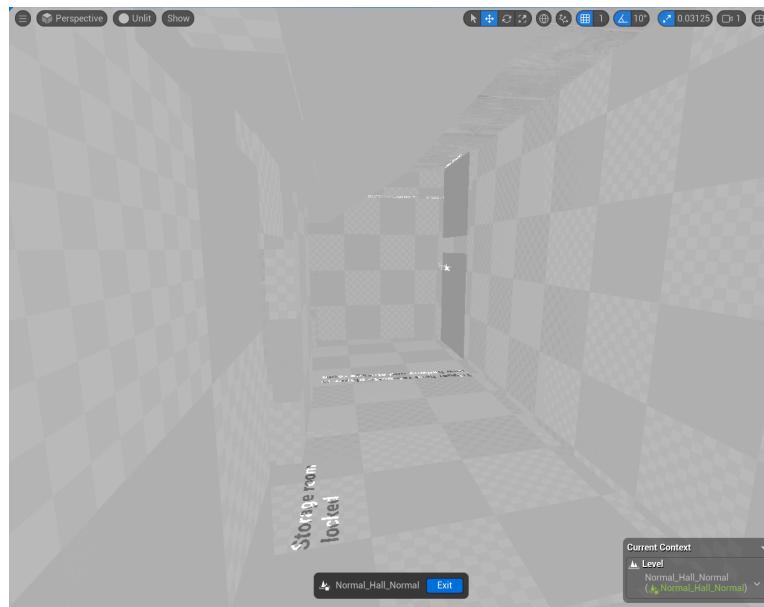
Normal hallway image 1, taken from kitchen door, this is what the player will see upon leaving the kitchen



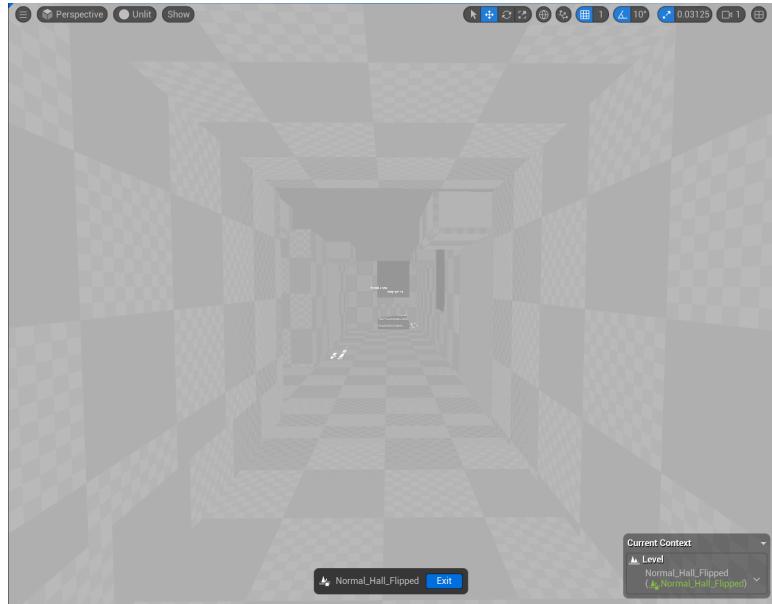
Normal hallway image 2, taken near the staircase, this is what the player will see upon walking down the stairs and looking left, note the gap in the wall and the glimpse of the living room door



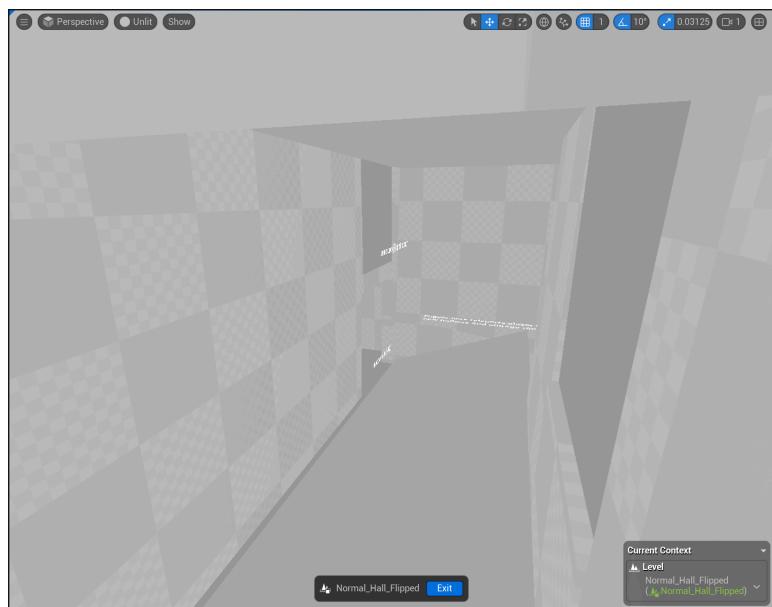
Normal hallway image 3, displays the crack in the wall, this crack shows the hammer within the storage room



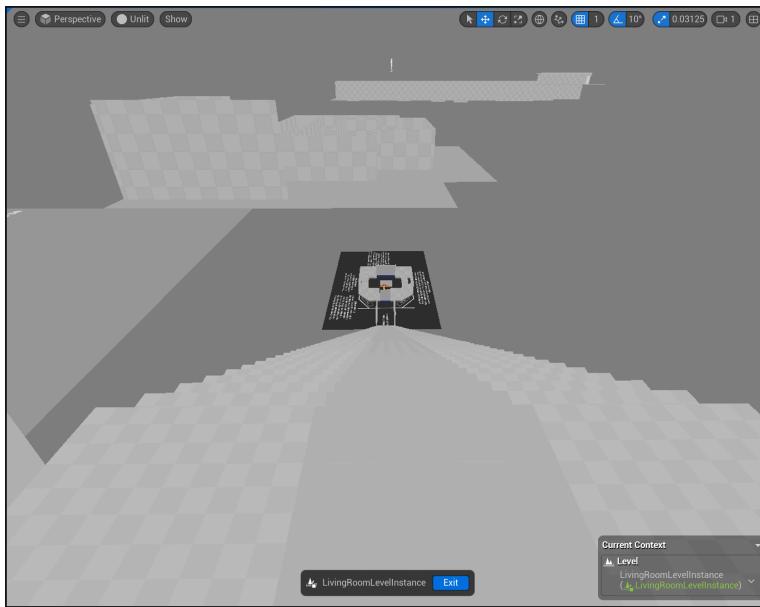
Normal hallway image 4, taken at the end of the hallway upon turning right, shows the storage room door on the left, the front door on the right and the cinema door on the ceiling above the front door



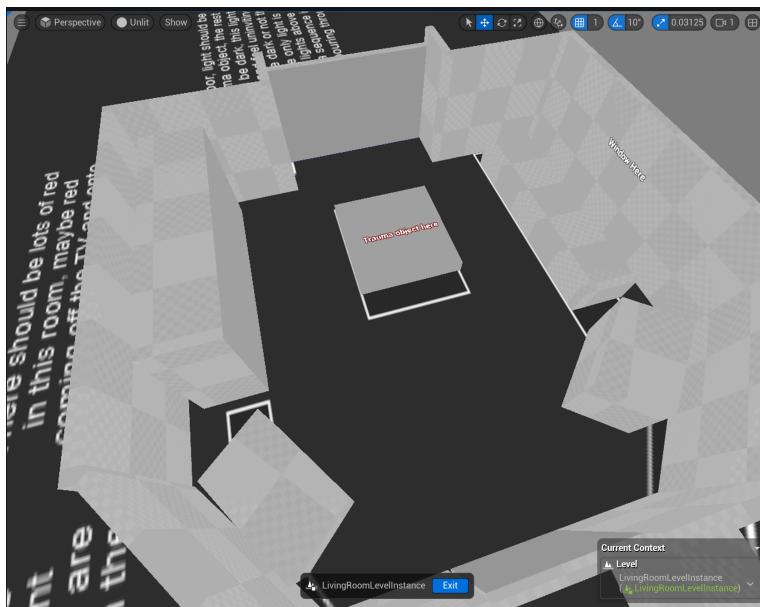
Normal hallway flipped image 1, taken from kitchen door/player exit



Normal hallway flipped image 2 shows the upside down storage room door and the front door as well as the now normally oriented cinema room door



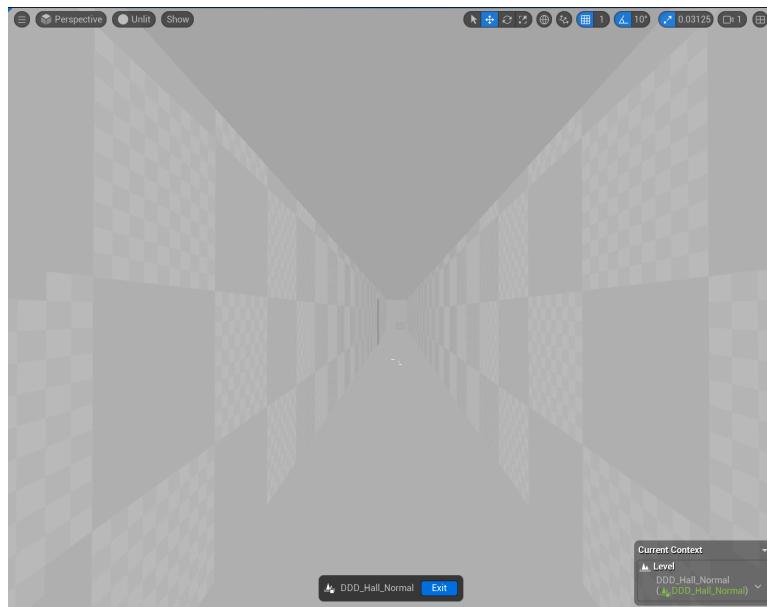
Living room image 1, displays void staircase that leads down into the living room from the bedroom window



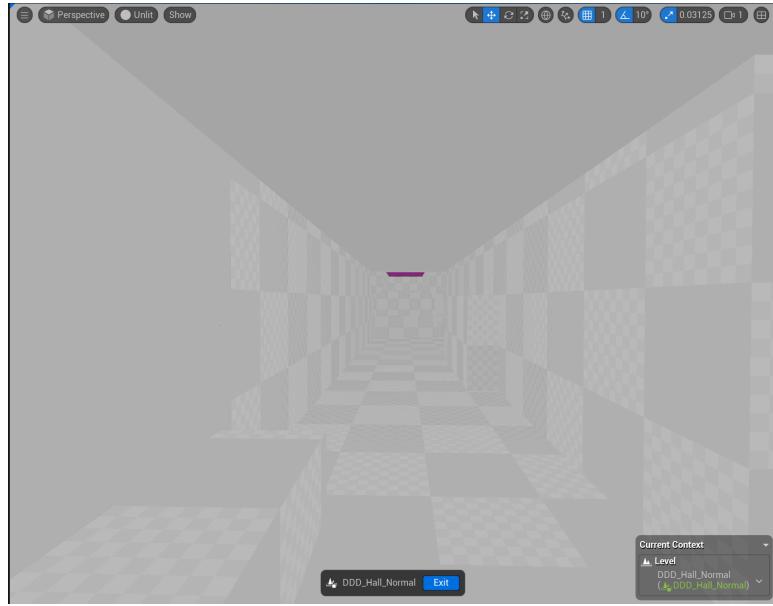
Living room image 2, displays living room layout as well as the trauma object location



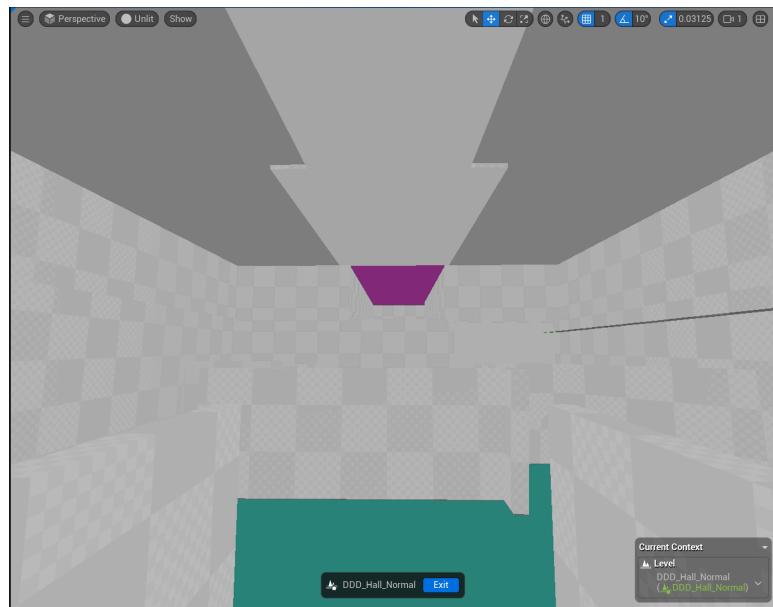
Hallway switching room, here the player can flip both hallways in the normal and DDD world upside down



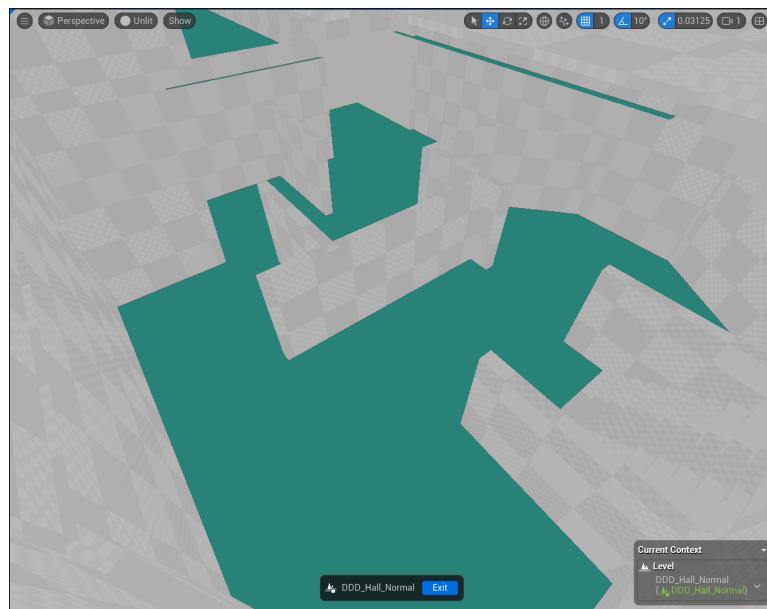
DDD hallway image 1, taken from entrance



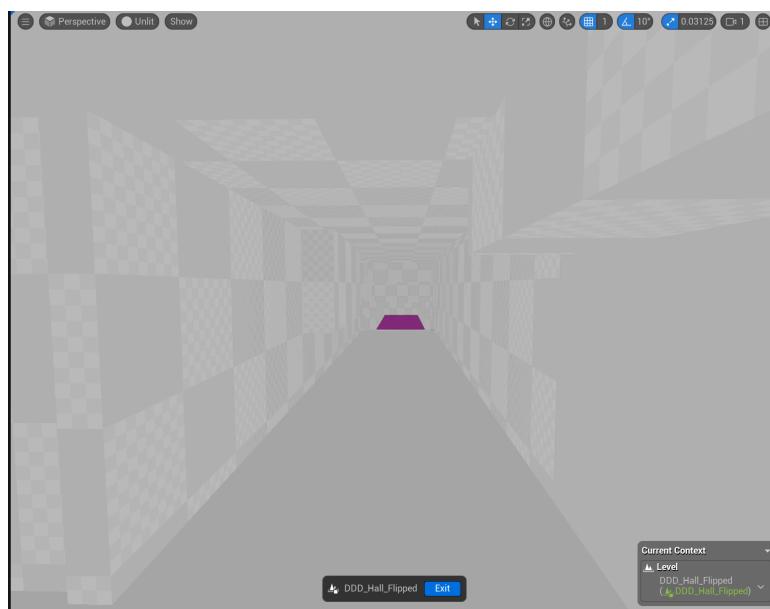
DDD hallway image 2, taken from around the corner at the end of the hallway in the image above



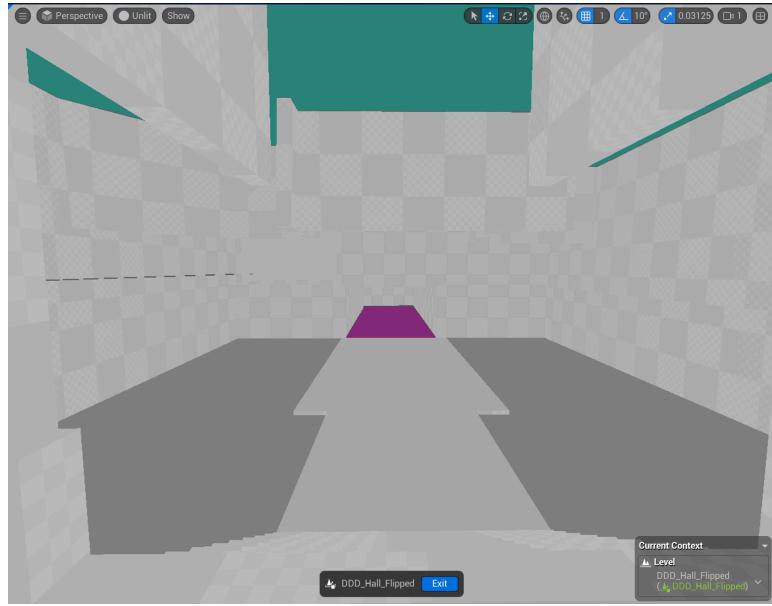
DDD hallway image 3, showcases the upside down path to the conservatory and the elevator (back right)



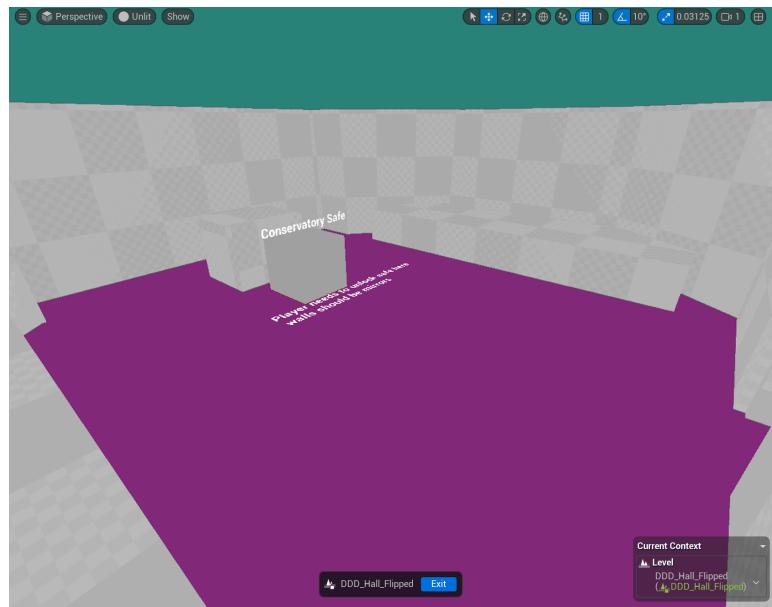
DDD hallway image 4



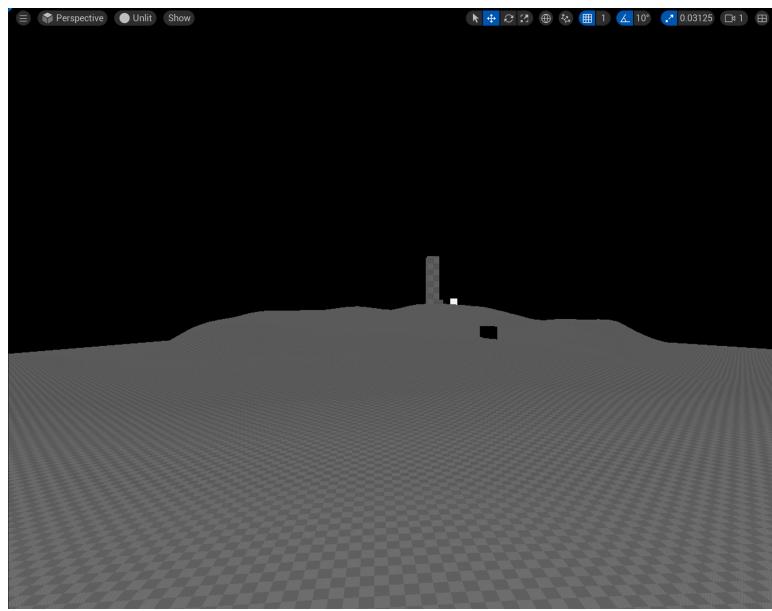
DDD hallway flipped image 1, taken from around the corner at the end of the hallway, note the upside down mirror on the right



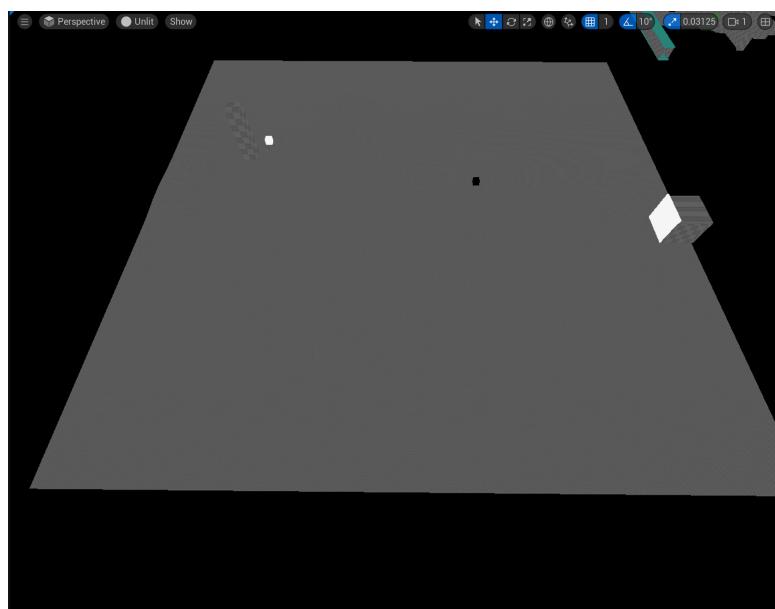
DDD hallway flipped image 2, note the players ability to now access the conservatory



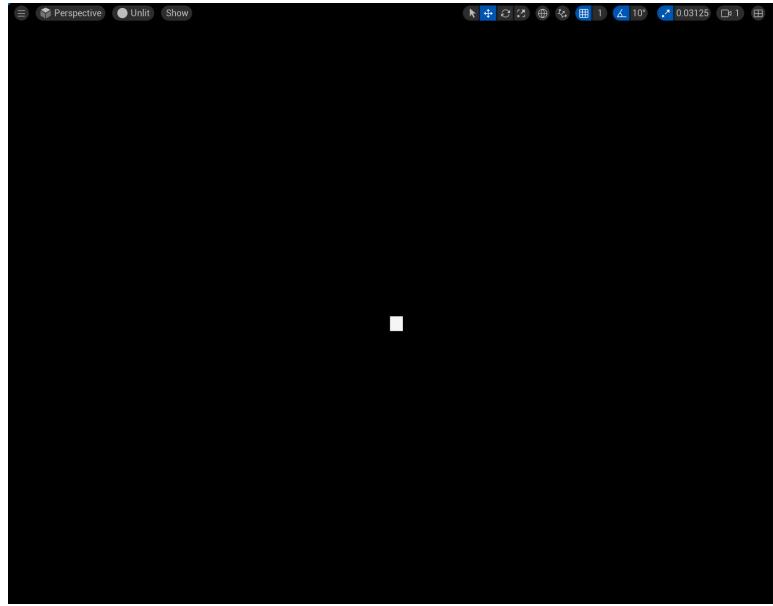
Conservatory room, notice the entrance on the right and the safe in the middle



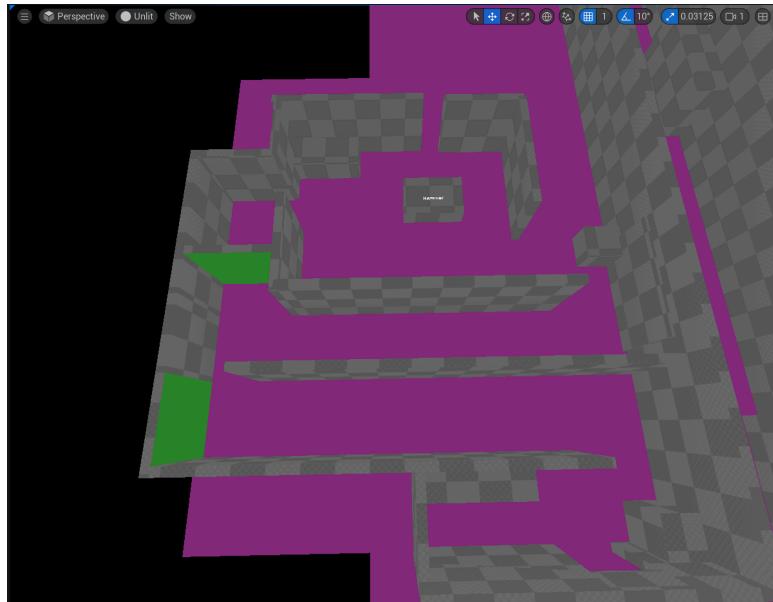
Void/Tree area image 1, taken from above elevator exit



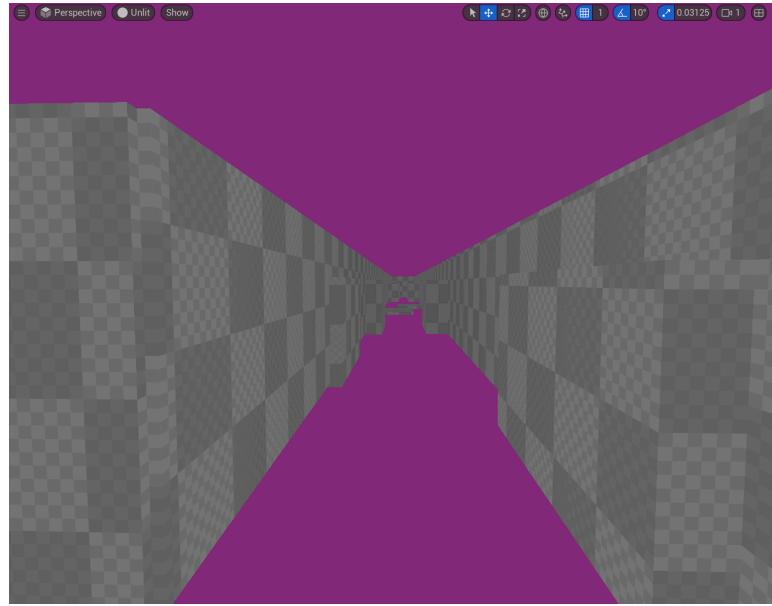
Void/tree area image 2, showcases the entire area from above including the elevator



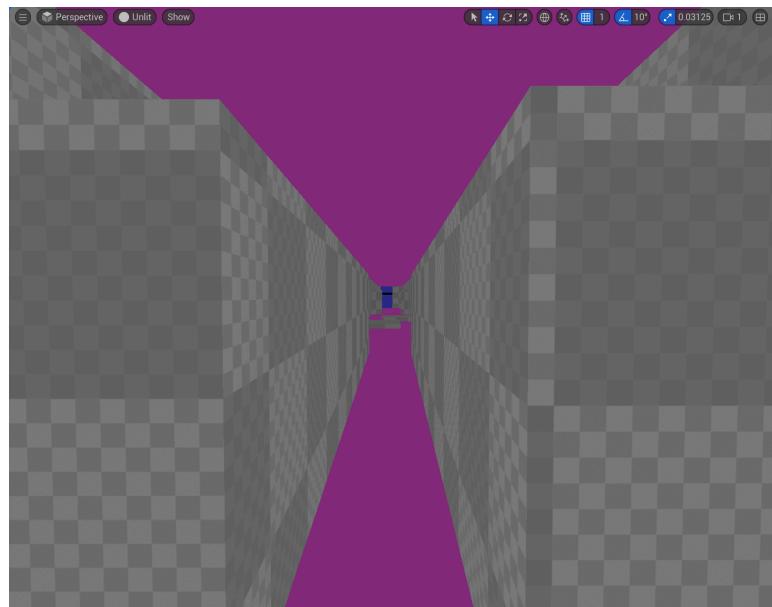
Void area 2, the player is teleported here after cutting down the tree in the previous section



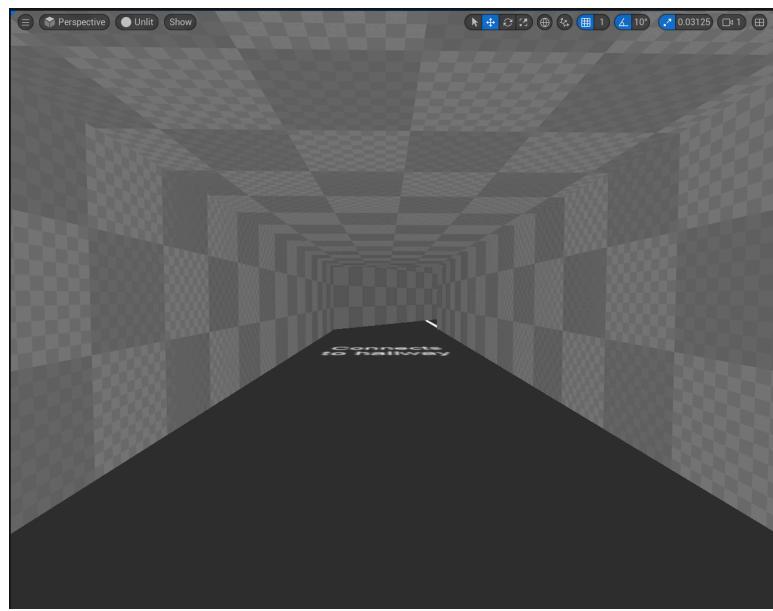
Storage room image 1, showcases top down view of the storage room, notice the hammer and crack in the wall



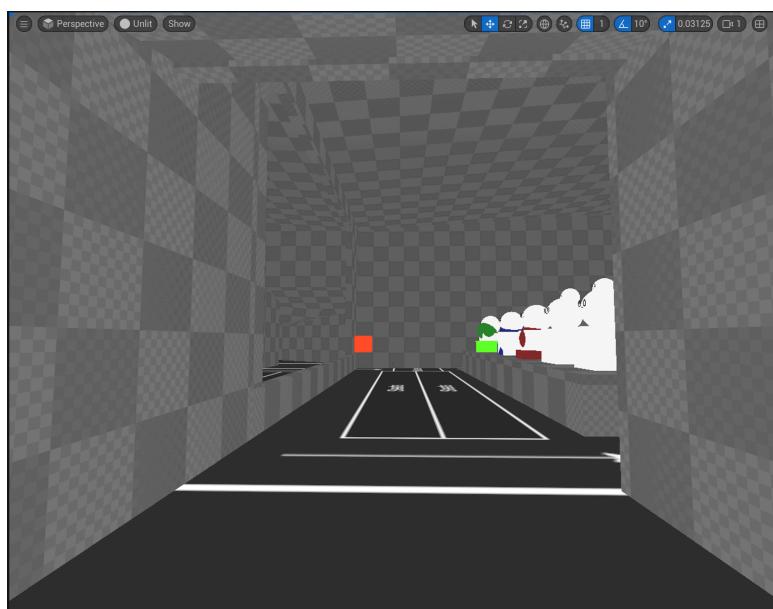
Chase hallway image 1, showcases hallway after leaving the storage room, notice it has changed from the normal hallway layout to be far longer and include obstacles



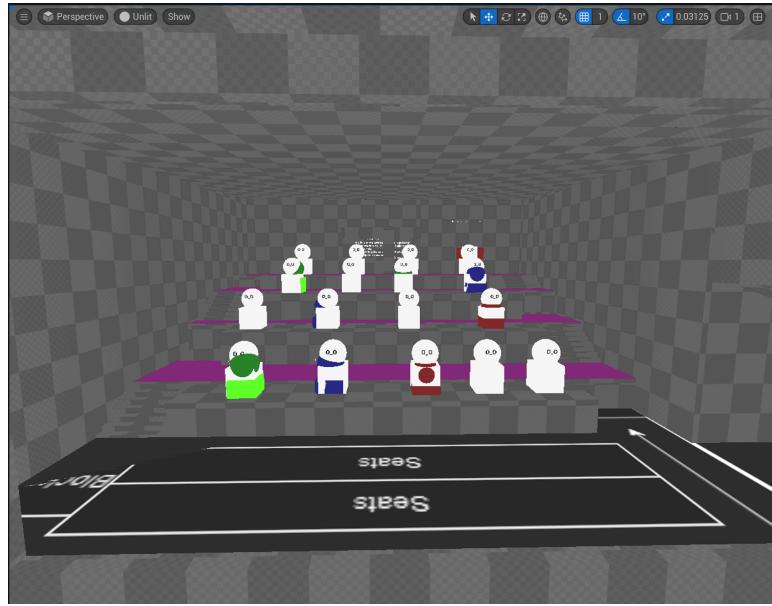
Chase hallway image 2, taken from the opposite end of the hallway/where the player needs to run to



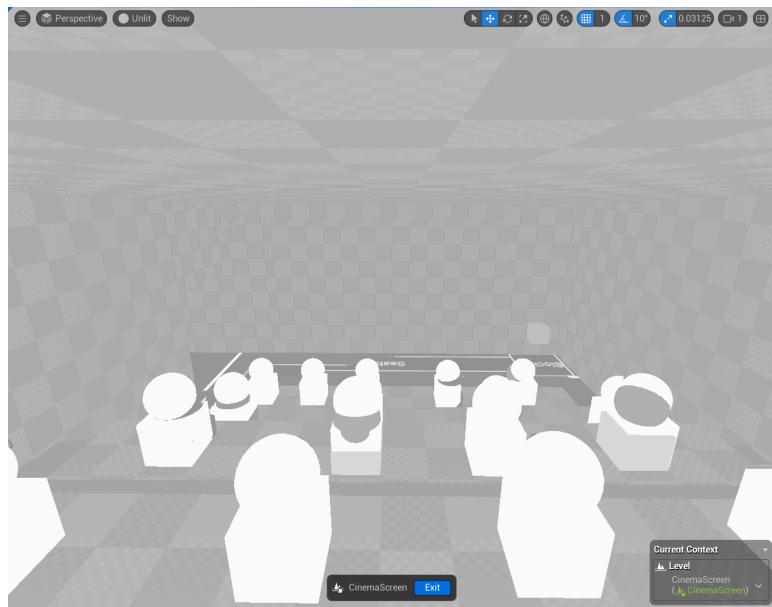
Cinema image 1, displays entrance tunnel to the cinema



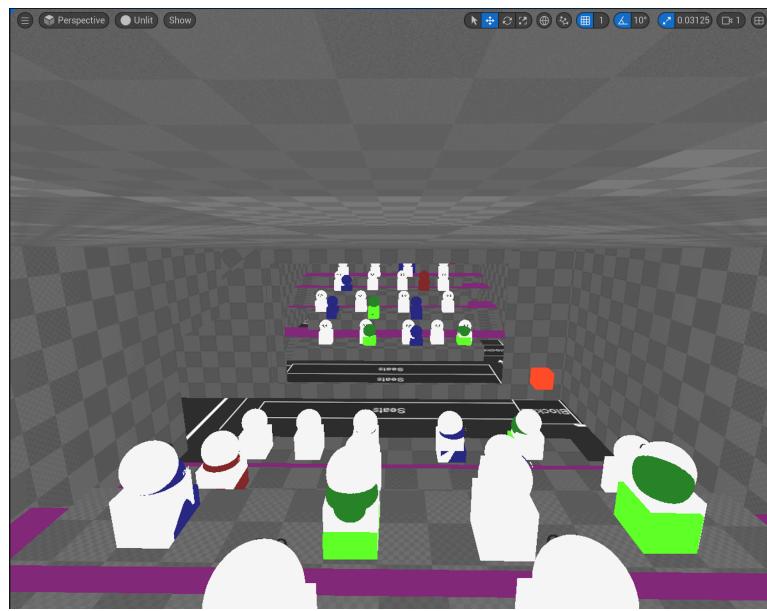
Cinema image 2, displays the players view upon turning the corner and entering the cinema room



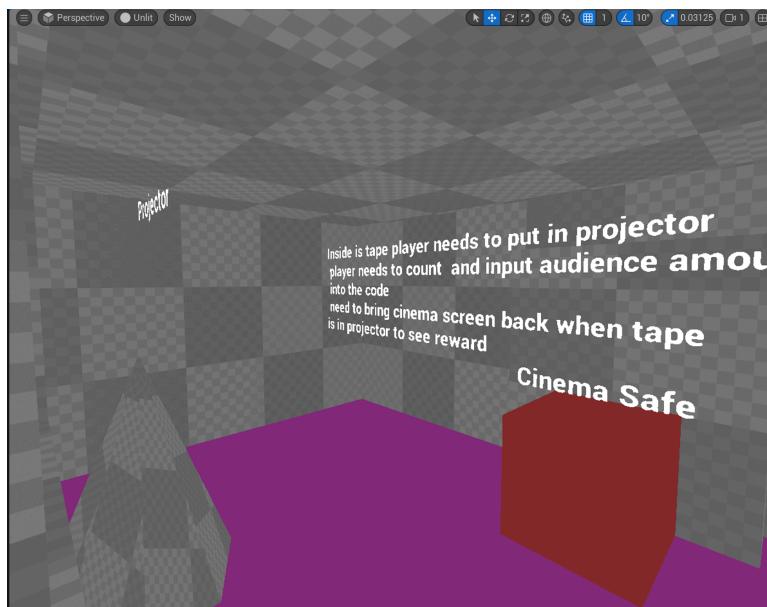
Cinema image 3, displays front orientation of the cinema room from inside of where the screen will be during gameplay



Cinema image 4, taken from the top/back of the cinema before the screen has been deactivated, note that this image has been taken whilst in the level instance editor hence the change in colour



Cinema image 5, taken from the top/back of the cinema after the screen has been deactivated



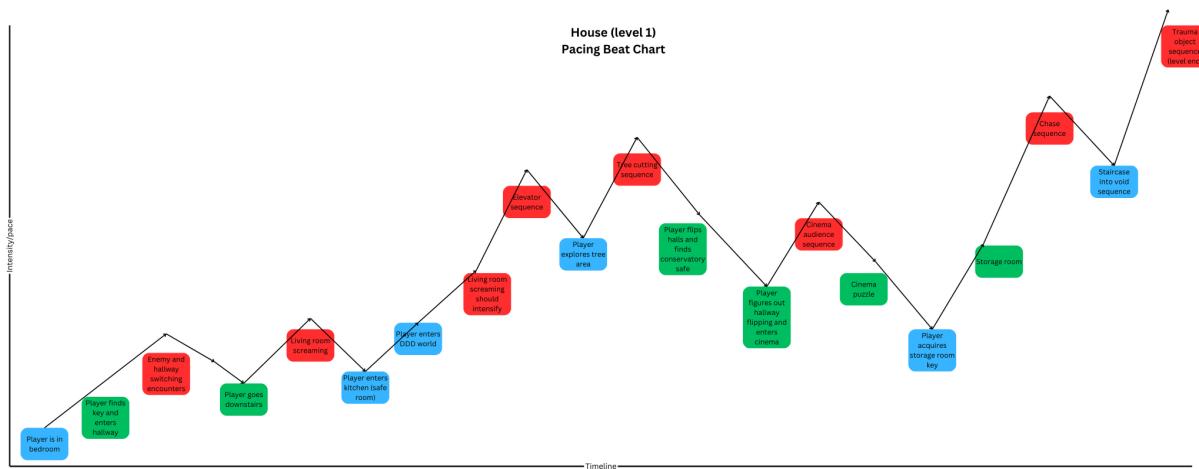
Cinema image 6, displays projector room located at the top/back of the cinema

Pacing:

Red - Scripted sequence/horror sequence

Green - Puzzle sequence

Blue - Exploration



Hard gates, Soft gates and Valves:

Valves:

We employ the usage of valves across the house level in order to limit where the player can go. This ensures that they do not backtrack through the level unnecessarily and thus limits the amount of confusion players will/could feel. We places these valves at specific points in the level, namely after or before large set pieces or events with the two usages of valves in the house level being explained below:

The bedroom window:

Upon smashing the bedroom window and entering the living room/trauma objet sequence players will be unable to go back through the void and into Daisy's bedroom. This means that we can keep the intensity of the trauma sequences high by making the player unable to go back towards a safe area. In practice we prevent the player from going backwards by teleporting them to a new environment as mentioned in the trauma sequence section above and placing a locked door behind them, preventing exit.

The elevator:

After interacting with the elevator for the first time players will be teleported to the tree area. Since this area is linked to a major scripting event we only allow the player to access this area once, avoiding confusion and bugs from ruining the players experience.

Soft gates:

We only use one soft gate throughout the house level in the form of normal doors. Whilst we only use one type of soft gate, it appears consistently across the level with the player interacting with it often. The doors act as soft gates through their slowing of the player and overall game pacing via the 3 stage unlock process. Players must interact with the door to open it slightly and interact once more to push the door fully open. This staggered and slow opening process ensures that the player is slowed down. This works well in sections where we need to slow the pacing back down after a high intensity sequence. Alternatively the door works well during high intensity moments as a way to place pressure on the player, slowing them down when speed is essential, an example of this could be placing a door in the house level chase sequence.

Hard gates:

We use hard gates extensively to guide the player in a specific direction, aiding us in providing a curated and linear horror experience and preventing the player from experiencing events out of order which may lead to disorientation and confusion.

Hard gates used in the house level:

Infinite staircase - this stops the player from going downstairs until they have completed the “get ready for work” puzzle, ensuring that they understand the controls, how they can interact with the environment and introduce them to the games enemy before moving them into a more intense area of the level.

Storage room lock - The storage room lock ensures that players problem solving skills are adequately tested by the cinema and environment rotating puzzles before they are able to grab the hammer and smash the bedroom window, without this hard gate the player would be able to bypass all of the challenges this level provides. Furthermore, this hard gate ensures we are able to increase and control pacing before the high intensity trauma sequence.

Bedroom window - The bedroom window hard gate stops the player from finishing the level immediately, ensuring that they experience the house level and learn how to play the game before they are allowed to finish and advance to the next and consequently more intense level.

Pacing set pieces (what do we do to slow pacing purposely?):

Pacing is a major element of horror video games often making or breaking the horror experience. For this reason, we implement a number of set pieces designed to precisely control pacing and ensure we are giving players the intended experience.

Pacing set pieces in level:

Staircase into the void - The staircase into the void set piece comes after the player has broken the bedroom window, this section should slow down the pacing after the player has just survived the enemy chase sequence. This section should be approximately 2 minutes long with the player travelling down a straight staircase. Here we should build tension slowly with the screams from the living room getting louder as the player goes downwards. The player should be at the living room door by the time they reach the bottom of the staircase.

Chase sequence - Whilst the chase sequence is a normal set piece we also use it to increase pacing greatly before the player is slowed down for the staircase sequence. This increase in pacing ensures that we keep players on their toes especially since it takes place after the player has finished the last puzzle, ensuring they do not relax just yet.

Elevator sequence - We also use an elevator sequence and the subsequent tree/void segment to purposefully slow the player down, forcing them into a tight and limited environment in order to build tension, release it and then build more tension ready for the players return back to the house. This up and down in tension and intensity ensures that the player stays engaged whilst also furthering our experience goal of making the player feel uncomfortable and tense through something more scripted and designed.

Navigation:

landmarks/weenies/sign posting

We use three landmarks within the house level, one being the bedroom as a whole but more specifically its window. The bedroom window is one of the first things that the player will see upon gaining control, it being one of the only light sources in the bedroom and its central nature within the environment ensures that players are extremely unlikely to miss it. Immediately the player should understand their objective and the window's importance in fulfilling that. On top of this, the window

being in the bedroom and thus the players first room/spawn allows the player to make a mental map within their head, this being the first room and element in their mental map ensures that they are unlikely to forget it but also form the rest of their mental map around it, this keeps the player focused on their objective of smashing the window by relating the rest of the environment to that objective. This also gives the player a central point to fix their mental map around which is extremely important during the door swapping puzzle, enabling players to understand and visualize the changes that the door swapping causes to the rest of the environment based on its effect to the bedroom.

The second landmark is the kitchen. The kitchen acts more so like a hub room than a landmark however it is still an area of the level that players will use as an anchor point/important landmark when drawing their mental maps due to its importance in allowing them to interact with the levels 2 primary mechanics, the configuration and hallway flipping. Its essentiality to the players objective and subsequent completion of said objective makes it standout in the players mind more so than other areas of the level like the study room, cinema or elevator. Its nature as a hub room also means players are going to keep returning to it, increasing its essentiality, prominence and memorability.

The third landmark we use is the hammer in the storage room. Players will catch a glimpse of the hammer soon after starting the game. Having shown players the smashable window before the hammers introduction players should be able to connect the two, understanding that they need the hammer in order to smash the window and complete the level. By showing the player the hammer early on we give them an objective to work towards. The position of the hammer means that they are also likely to go down the hallway, noticing both the cinema door on the roof and the fact that the storage room is locked further guiding the player and giving them two objectives/points of interests to work towards

Pinching:

We also use pinching extensively throughout the house level in order to funnel and direct players towards objectives/rooms. This pinching ensures that players are unlikely to miss critical environments or details such as the conservatory or elevator. Pinching is also used from a pacing and player experience point of view allowing us to move the player into a more restricted environment such as a tight hallway, this in turn enables us to increase the horror elements and scare factor through the now restricted environment. For example, placing the player in a tight corridor with the enemy increases pacing intensity and the fear that players feel due to the lack of movement/escape possibilities coupled with our already sluggish movement.

Visual language/affordance used:

Alongside the usage of our navigation and pinching techniques we also utilise visual language and UI affordance heavily in order to guide players towards items and objectives on a micro scale.

In terms of UI affordance we employ an “E” to interact UI billboard. This UI widget is displayed over an interactable object once the player has entered its interaction range. This in turn signals to the player what can and cannot be interacted with thus guiding them towards objects that can be interacted with. We engrave in the players mind early on that important objects will be hidden within others such as drawers and cabinets, establishing that interacting with things allows the player to find rewards/secrets. This teaching coupled with the “E” to interact affordance allows us to easily prompt players to explore and interact with items they find in the environment.

Alongside UI affordance we utilise a consistent visual language in the form of the colour red. As other aspects of the game design document make clear, red is an important colour thematically for our narrative however it is equally important in

gameplay serving as a way for us to provide the player with vital information. We use the colour red whether it be blended into the environment or outgoing and pronounced to signal to the player that Daisy's mental state is decreasing and thus the horror intensity of the game will increase. This ranges from an increase in enemy encounters, triggering audio cues or an increase in the ethereal nature of the environment. Whilst red signals danger it is also used to signal an extremely important object such as the layout configuration or hallway swapping buttons due to how much it stands out against the environment. Red is such a major aspect of the game we employ a post processing filter that washes out all colours in the environment save for the colour red, keeping it pronounced and strong.

Guidance:

Alongside our visual language and UI affordance we use other methods of guidance to push players in the direction we intend in order to maximise the enjoyment they find within our experience but also to provide clarity and rules within that clarity.

Shape theory:

Across the house level we employ basic shape theory in order to guide players towards critical objects. Shape theory dictates that generally, cuboid shapes signify usefulness. This theory has been used extensively throughout the house level with critical objects like the layout configuration and hallway flipping buttons as well as the trauma object appearing as a red cube. Since these are the most important objects found within the level, having these be the only ones to adopt and conform to shape theory makes them stand out and allows us to subtly nudge players towards interacting with them more heavily than we nudge them to interact with less important elements of the environment.

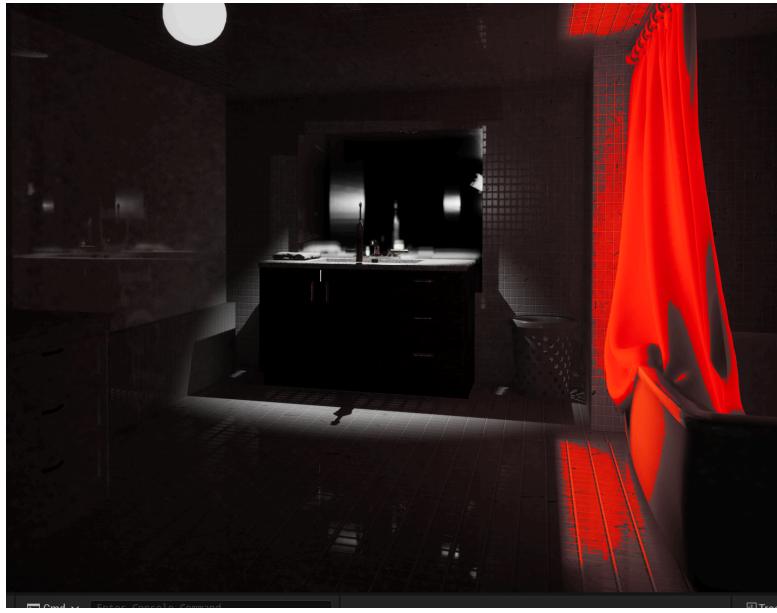
Light:

As with many games we use light extensively to guide players towards objectives and items. We use light in an extremely varied way across the level with some lights

slightly poking around a bend, appearing through a crack in a doorway or simply illuminating an important area. Below are some examples of this usage of light. Light is an especially powerful tool we employ due to how dark our environments are, any source of light stands out more and the atmosphere or fear and discomfort we create drives the player to reach these light areas due to the refuge they provide, subtly using the players natural flight or fight response to danger to aid us in guiding them across the level.



An example of light appearing through a cracked doorway, subtly guiding the player towards it



Example of white light contrasting the darkness to guide players towards the sink, notice the red signalling that danger is nearby

Teasing/breadcrumbs:

As previously mentioned we use the hammer as a landmark however we also use it as a way to tease and guide the player via breadcrumbing. The hammer is teased to the player through a small crack in the wall that they cannot avoid effectively burrowing in the player's mind and giving them an objective to complete/acquire. However the hammer is also used as a form of breadcrumb allowing us to guide players to other areas where they can advance towards their objective. The hammer being placed in the storage room guides players down the right side of the hallway and thus allowing them to notice the cinema room on the roof as well as the fact that the storage room needs a key. Particularly attentive players may already be able to understand that the two are linked, advancing their objective of getting the hammer through showing them where they should go.

The Train Level Design:

Pre production:

Location:

Train station, On Train, station hallways

Mechanics list:

Movement

- Walk
- Sprint
- Interact with objects
- Mirrors (checkpoints)
- Critical objects (trauma objects)
- Notes
- Miscellaneous objects

Narrative link/story of level:

- *Should take place a year or two after level 1, around winter time.*
- *should have callbacks to previous levels or items from the narrative*
- *should show the player a clear overarching puzzle they need to complete to complete the game*
- *should then set up blocks and mini puzzles they must complete first*
- *player should complete the final trauma sequence*

- *player should piece together that Daisy is attempting to escape her current life in the UK and leave the past relationship behind*
- *Player should have a conclusive gameplay segment with the enemy to show development*
- *Story should come to an open ended finish by the end of my level*

Experience goals:

- Test the player's attention to detail skills, and puzzle solving skills
- This level should be more intense than others to show the difficulty in her taking this step in her life
- Complete the final trauma section
- Complete the overarching puzzle to reach the specific seat and carriage and end the game
- *Players should feel nervous and uncomfortable and cautious of what's to come. The environment should be laid out in a way where the level has places of interest to explore and things to interact with while reminding them of their overarching goal of solving the puzzle to make the train move.*

Player primary and secondary goals (what do we want to do):

- *Test the player on all of their skills used so far and mechanics learned in the previous levels*
- *Make the player feel threatened and weak*
- *Give the player their final encounter with the enemy*
- *Guide the player to completing the level/ game*

Player primary and secondary objectives (what do players need to do):

- *Solve first puzzle in first carriage*
- *Find a way out of the first carriage*
- *Complete trauma sequence to collect the final trauma object*
- *complete Void Puzzle*
- *Complete Underground station avoid the light segments*
- *Complete carriage chase sequence*
- *complete final trauma sequence*
- *complete final encounter with enemy*
- *Burn all of the collected trauma objects in the final carriage*

Set pieces:

- *Interact with Trauma object (old plane ticket)*
- *Toilet door opens then the player closes it behind them and then the floor disappears and the player falls in a dark void*
- *chase after escape door throughout multiple segments of the game*
- *Lights out section (acts as pay off for previous built up tension)*
- *level layout changes offering the player a new path to explore*
- *first encounter with the train lights which kill the player this first one should act as a demonstration to show the player that the light is what kills them and that they must dodge it*
- *build tension back up again through station hallways*
- *second station makes players time their sprints from cover to cover without being seen by the light increasing intensity for the player*
- *train chase scene with the enemy from level 1, (high intensity keeps the player on the edge of their seat)*
- *Final chase sequence with very long carriage (inspired by Gwyndolin's hallway Boss fight - Dark Souls 1). [Dark Souls Dissected #12 - The Secret of Gwyndolin's Hallway](#) (and other cutscene trickery) Train Door locks behind the player*

when they escape the enemy, final checkpoint and final chase scene happens where the player has one way to go and it's to the exit door they have been chasing the entire level. This chase scene differs from the last by now testing the players reactions and movement skills by having them dodge obstacles while the walls close in on them.

- *After completing the sequence the player can burn their trauma object (old plane ticket) in a fire, and now the escape door is accessible which ends the game and rolls the credits*

Length estimates:

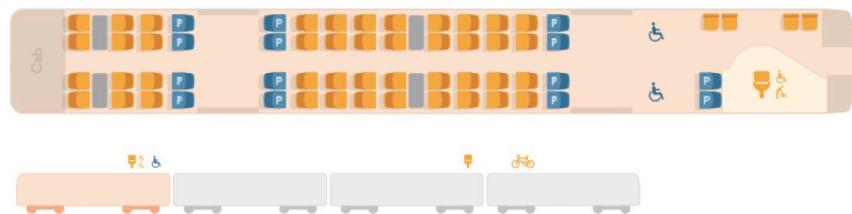
Level should be 10-15 minutes maximum

Architecture research:

London Underground:

[London Underground First Person Journey - Holborn to London Bridge Via Bank](#)

West Midlands Railway Trains Research:

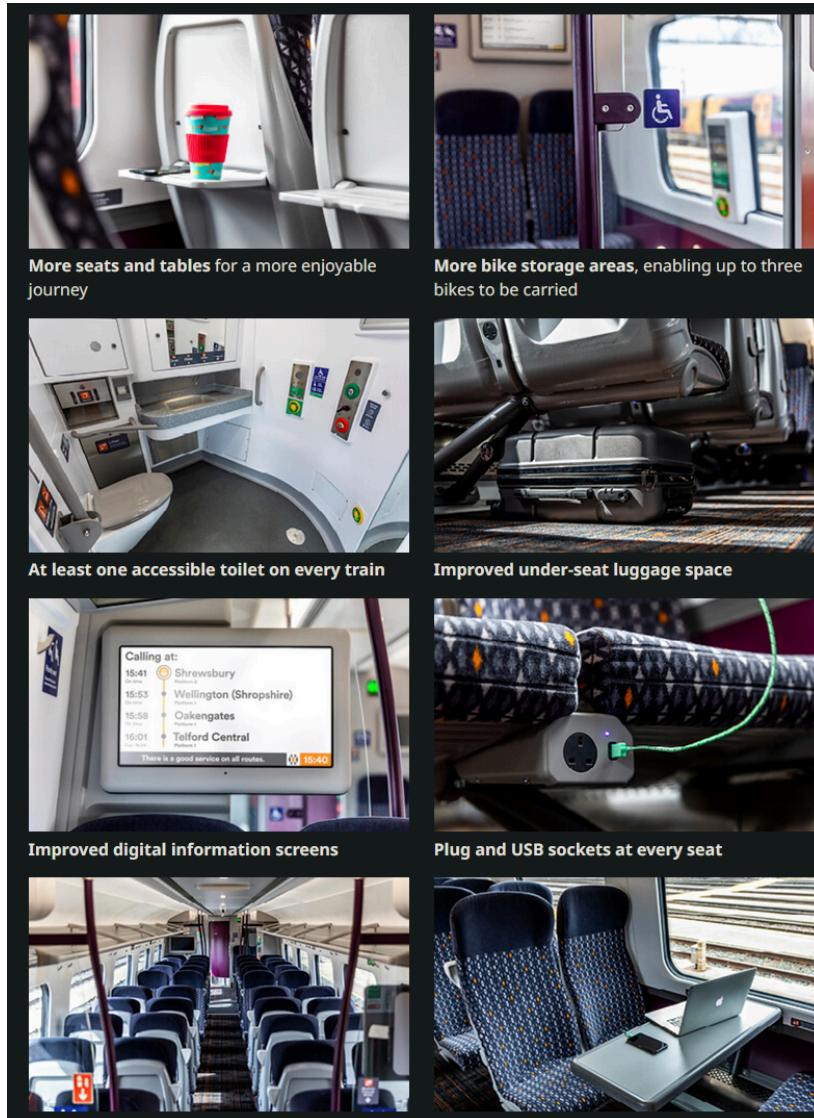


“Not only are the Class 730s physically longer than the trains they replace, meaning they can carry more people, the carriage interiors have been designed in a spacious, metro-style to maximise space.

“With modern features such as digital information screens, power points at every seat and accessible toilets, I am certain they will prove popular and our teams are looking forward to welcoming customers on board.”







East Midlands Railway Trains Research:



EMR train doors, toilet space



EMR train long view of carriage



EMR train standard carriage table seating



EMR train 2 seater table seats + handicap area



EMR train, luggage storage





Puzzle design:

Player should have a clear goal of the overarching puzzle at the start of the level but be blocked and forced to solve other smaller puzzles and complete gameplay segments before they can solve the big puzzle

i want to lead the player astray to a wrong answer to the puzzle first, and then that makes them think critically and outside of the box to solve the puzzle this should help create that memorable eureka feeling in the player when they find the solution

Puzzle idea 1:

the player can walk to the train driver door where it is locked and requires a 4 digit code to enter. Solving 4 mini puzzles throughout the train level will reveal the code to the door. The player will then enter the trauma segment/ dream version of the train which reveals that behind the drivers door is a fire which the player can burn all the collected trauma objects which will then start the train and the game will end.

Puzzle Idea 2:

In a room there are 4 pillars and a keypad

Each pillar is labelled either 1,2,3, or 4

Interacting with each pillar plays a sound a certain number of times.

The number of the pillar represents which number of the code it is

and the number of times the sound repeats is the number they need to type is

so for example

Pillar 1 = 5

Pillar 2 = 8

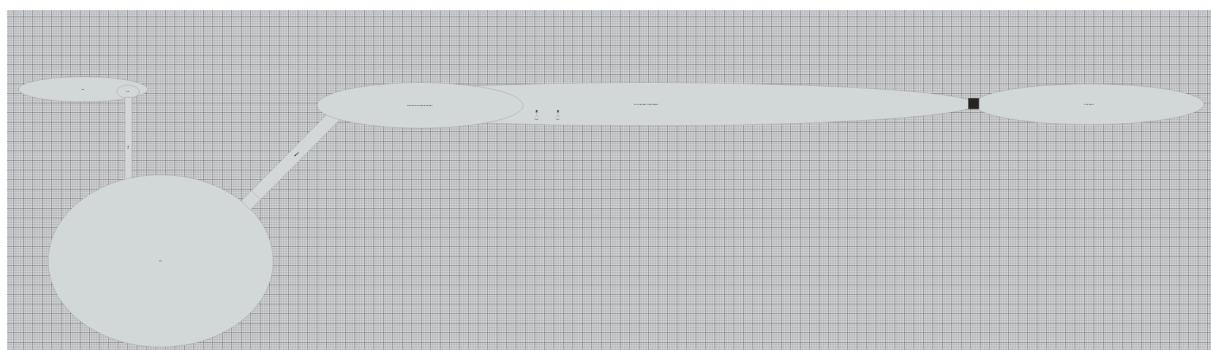
Pillar 3 = 1

Pillar 4 = 2

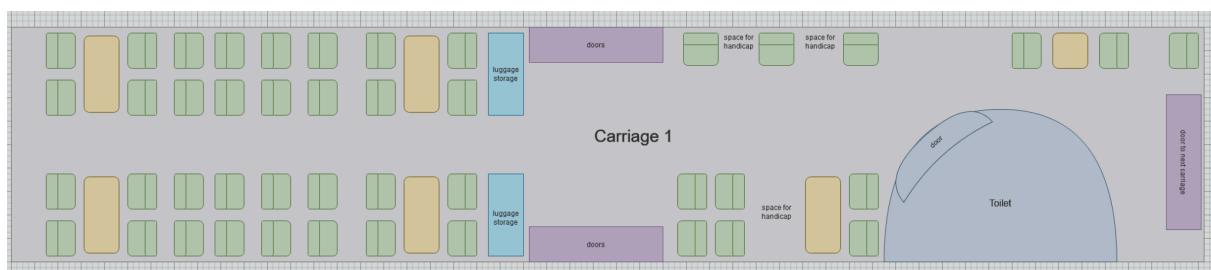
Therefore the code the player needs to enter would be 5812

Level layouts and blockmesh:

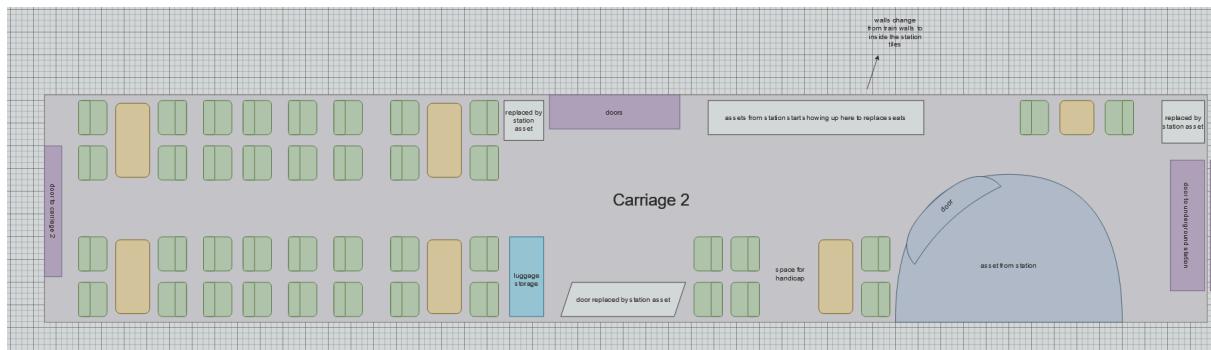
Level plan first bubble diagram:



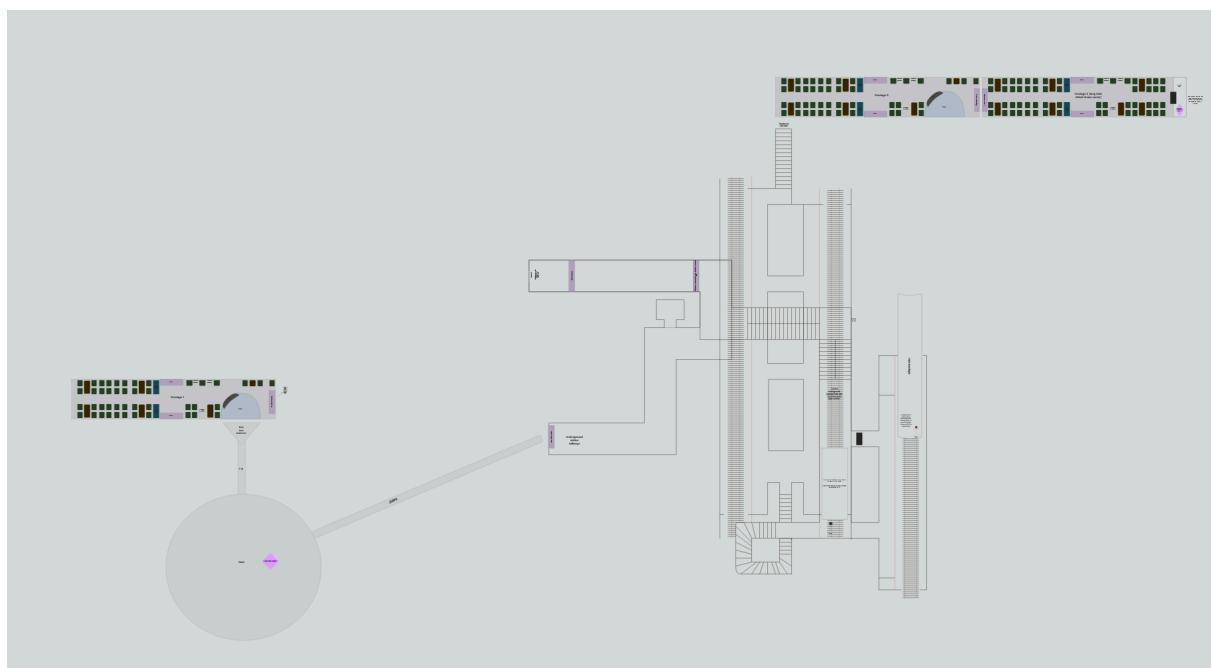
Train carriage 1 first iteration:



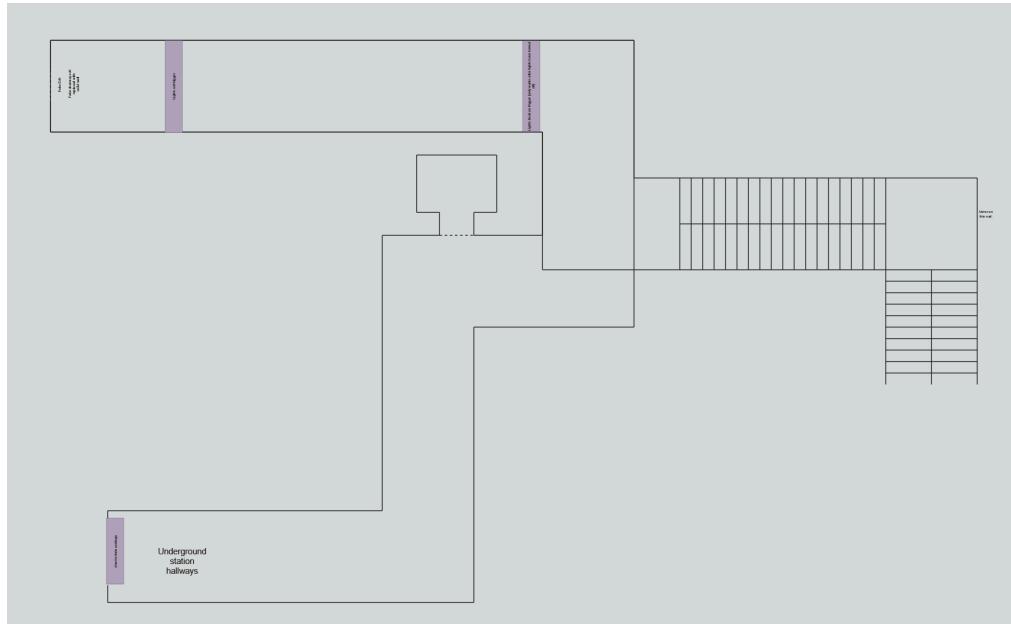
Scrapped Train carriage 2:



Full level layout:

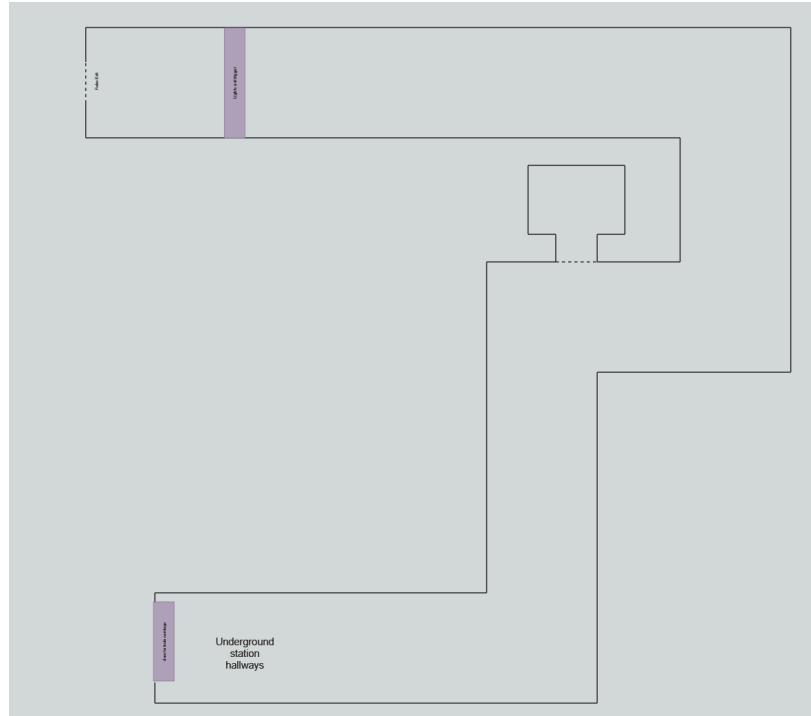


Underground hallways:

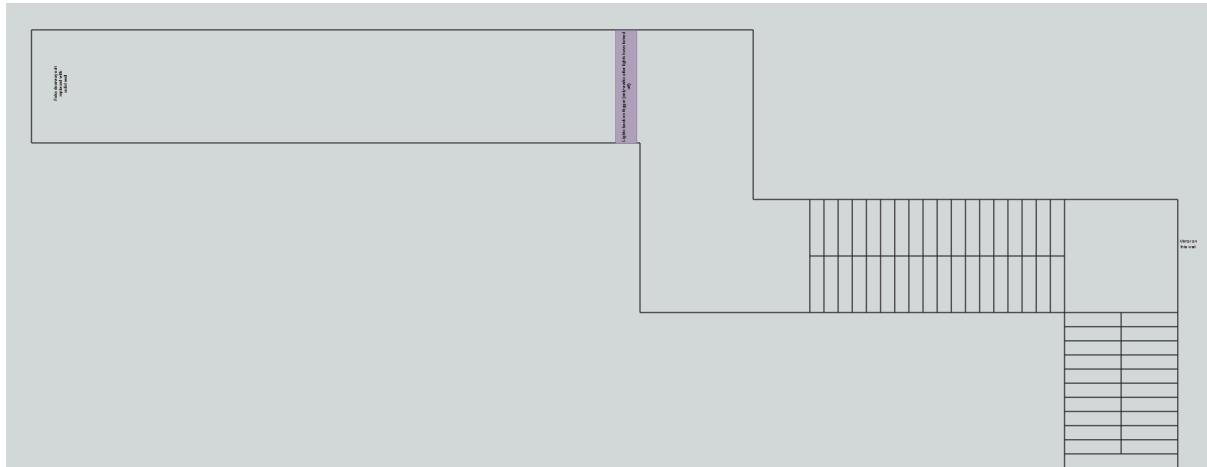


full layout

Underground hallway pre light out scare:



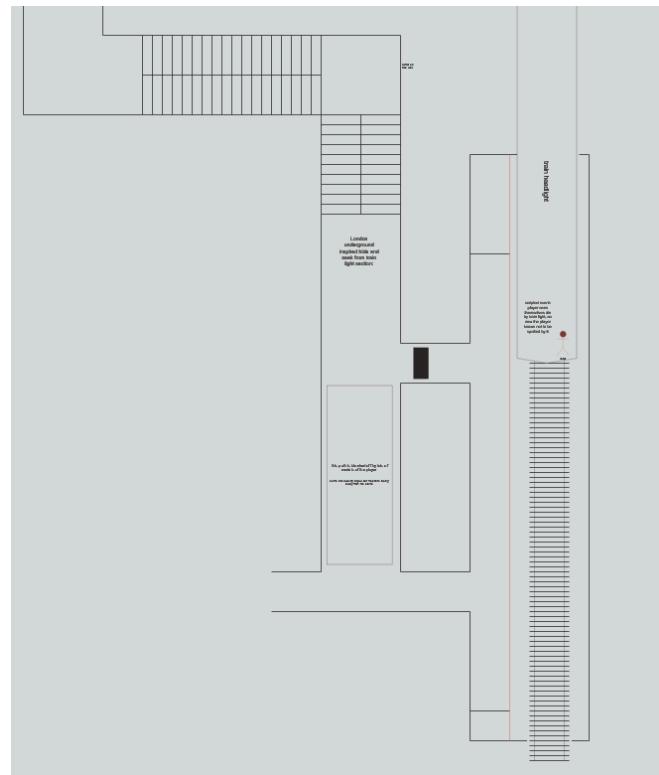
Underground hallway Post lights out scare:



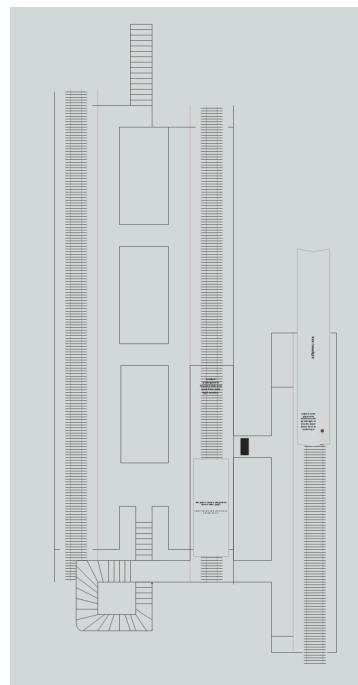
Post lights out scare layout

Path they came from gets blocked off and now a new path opens up which takes the player down to the underground railway station.

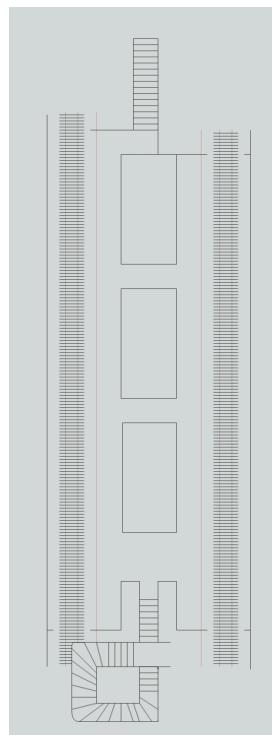
Underground railway station:



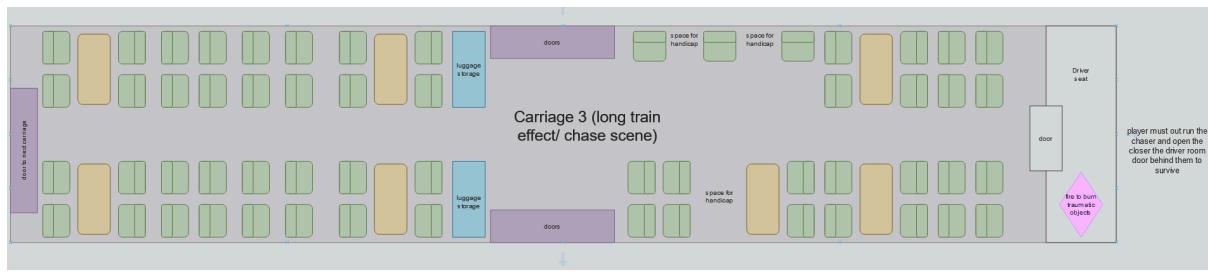
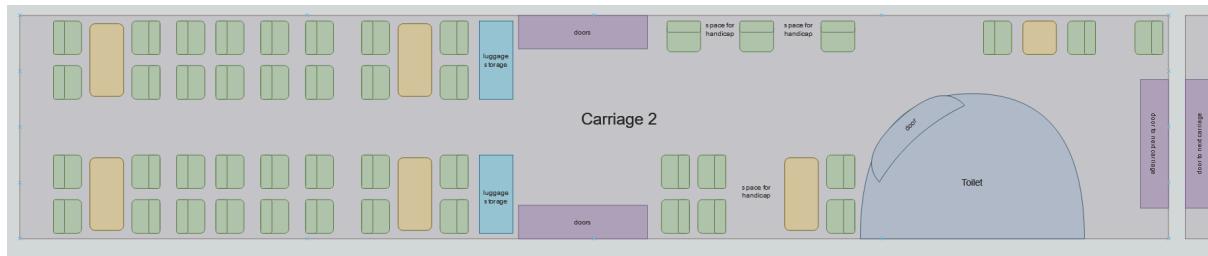
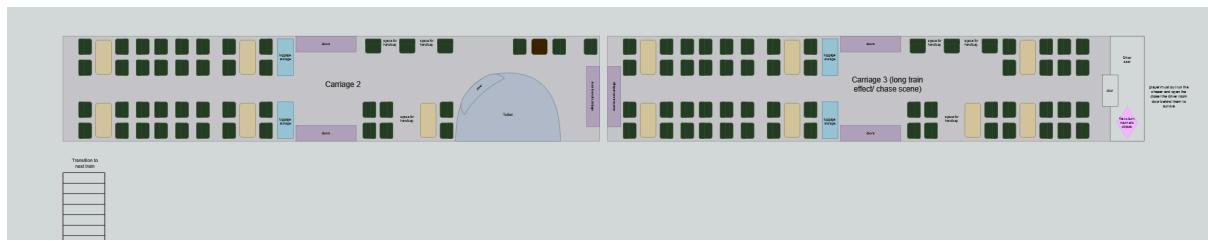
Full underground platforms layout:



Lowest platforms layout:



Carriage 2 & 3 layouts:



Pacing:

- Beat charts/maps
- intensity chart (games intensity vs players feeling of intensity)
- notes before starting map:
- First carriage should give the player the freedom to explore at their own pace
- toilet door void segment should be slow but build an intense atmosphere
- second carriage has a high speed high intensity chase sequence
- all trauma segments after this should be high intensity with lots of enemy sightings, a loud atmosphere and lots of scary events occurring

- As soon as the player has burned all of the trauma objects the intensity should slow down as the game reaches its end

Locations, how the player should feel and what the locations should aim to achieve:

Train Carriage 1:

Sets scene, introduces player to final level, reminds the player of the story and objective

Drop/void:

Confuses the player, pushes the narrative along, completes the trauma segments of the game starts to build tension

Hallway 1:

Builds tension, makes the player intrigued and worried of what is to come

Post Light Scare (Hallway2):

Kills tension with scare, starts to build it back up along with making the player confused

Underground Stations:

Fast paced, intense Gameplay puzzle, offers failstates and a challenge for the player

Train Chase Scene:

High intensity chase where the enemy from level 1 appears that the player must overcome one final time. While running through this section, they are back on the train they started on. Running through each carriage, the player will notice each one has a slight anomaly occurring such as the upside down carriage, or the empty carriage. (Inspired by The Exit8).

Final Chase (wall closing in):

Amalgamation of all the sequences before, tests the players skills and reaction times. The unattainable exit door returns, again taunting the player by moving away. Player must dodge and weave past obstacles without letting the closing in wall catch up to them.

Navigation:

My level is very straight forward and linear, meaning there is many places where the player needs to be guided. However, in certain areas, such as the second station, there is a wrong way to go but it is blocked off using the same barrier asset which is used earlier in the level to block a path, meaning the player should know when they come to the second station, that that barrier means they cannot go that way

Trauma Object and trauma sequence:

A plane ticket from the year 2003 which Daisy had bought and planned to use to leave her relationship and the UK but was talked out of using and was left buried at the bottom of her bag, and the back of her mind, ever since.

First instance:

In the void area after the drop from carriage 1, the player is in a giant circle with a code puzzle to solve however before they start the puzzle they will notice the ticket on the floor, interacting with object doesn't bring up the usual text context, but it will act as the trigger for the weird traumatic events to begin playing, these will include:

- text flashing on screen
- objects spawning in and disappearing
- sfx start playing
- sound clashing with other sounds
- a loud wind noise gets louder and louder

- At the end a loud scream plays while really fast text and images flash with the date on the plane ticket “2003” flashes which is the code to open the door to leave this area.

Final instance:

After the underground train station, the player climbs the flight of stairs up to the 2nd carriage, here the ticket can be seen again on a table, the chase scene will begin after walking past a trigger on the carriage and while the player gets chased down the carriage, the final trauma segment will start. This will have all the same effects as the last one, with loud sounds, flashing text and images which are meant to distract the player while they focus on being chased. It should make a loud chaotic scene which will match with the intensity of being chased.

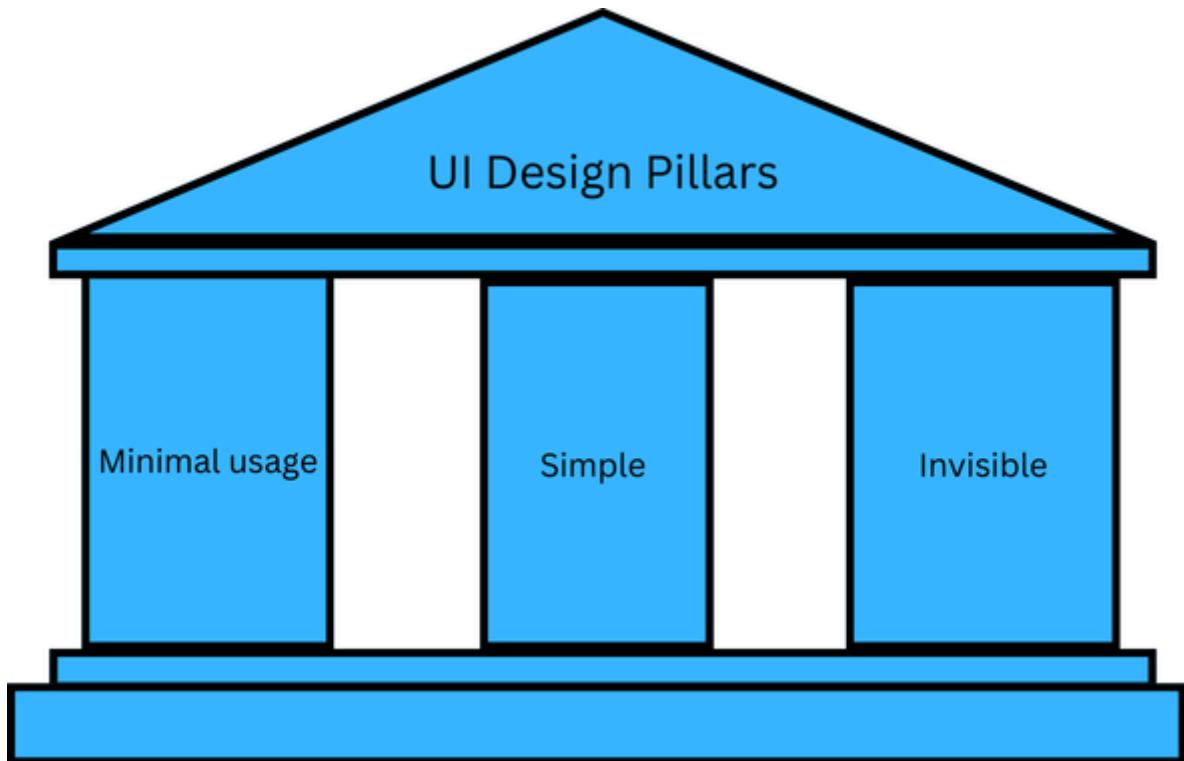


UI Design:

Design Philosophy:

Our main goal with the UI is to not take the player away from the game or its immersion by creating a small useful UI which seamlessly does its job without being invasive. Typically players won't notice a good UI, they usually only notice a poorly designed one so our goal is to avoid that. Also due to the small scale of our game we feel we don't need much UI as there aren't many menus or options for the player to go through except for an inventory and menu, this will help us keep our UI simple, non invasive and link to our design by subtraction philosophy.

Design Pillars:



Main menu:

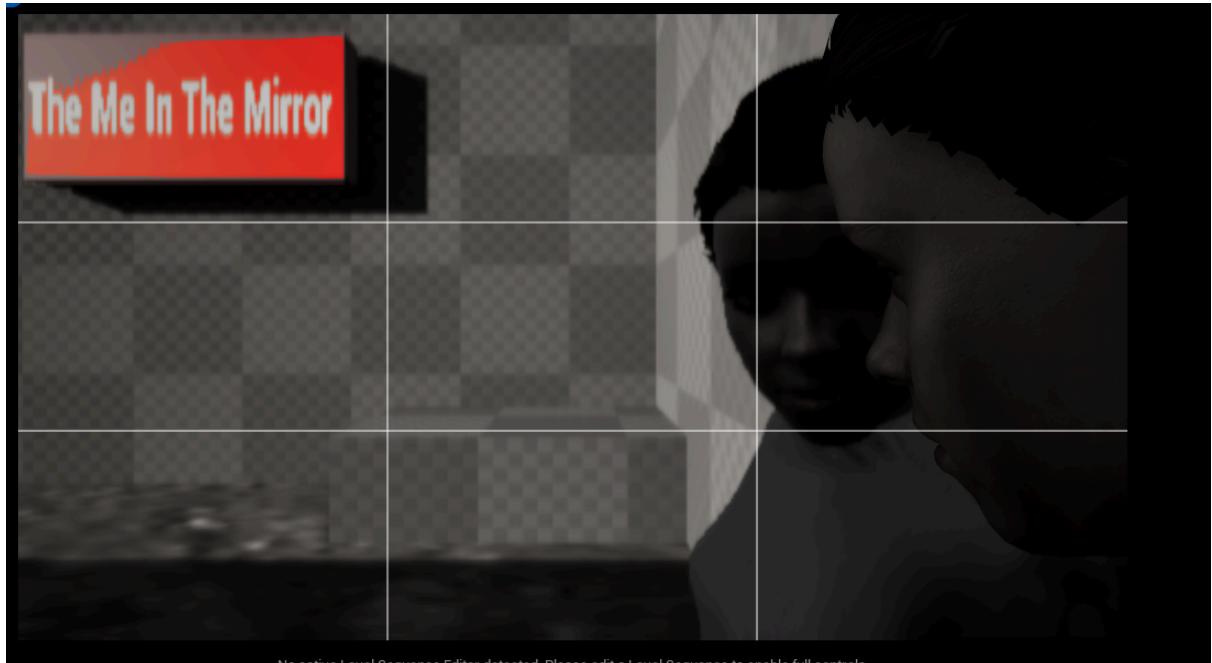
Overall design goals:

Our main goal with the main menu is to create an interface that is both simple to understand and navigate from a players perspective but also simple for our team to make. The menu simply needs a start, load and quit option. This UI should follow our design by subtraction philosophy, removing any unnecessary elements from it.

Wireframe/UI tests:

All wireframe/tests were completed in Unreal Engine 5. We did not wireframe the menu using Figma or another wireframing software as we found it difficult to achieve the look and angle we desired through a 2D medium

Initial concepts:



Initial concept 1



Initial concept 2



Initial concept 3

Final UI design:

[MainMenuUIWireframe.mp4](#)

Final Main Menu UI with art and music:

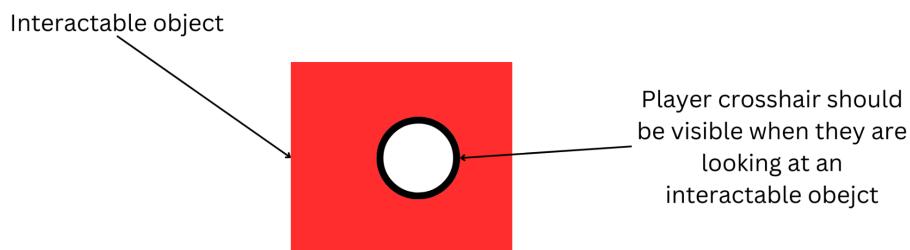
 FinalMenuDemo.mp4

Interaction UI:

Overall design goals:

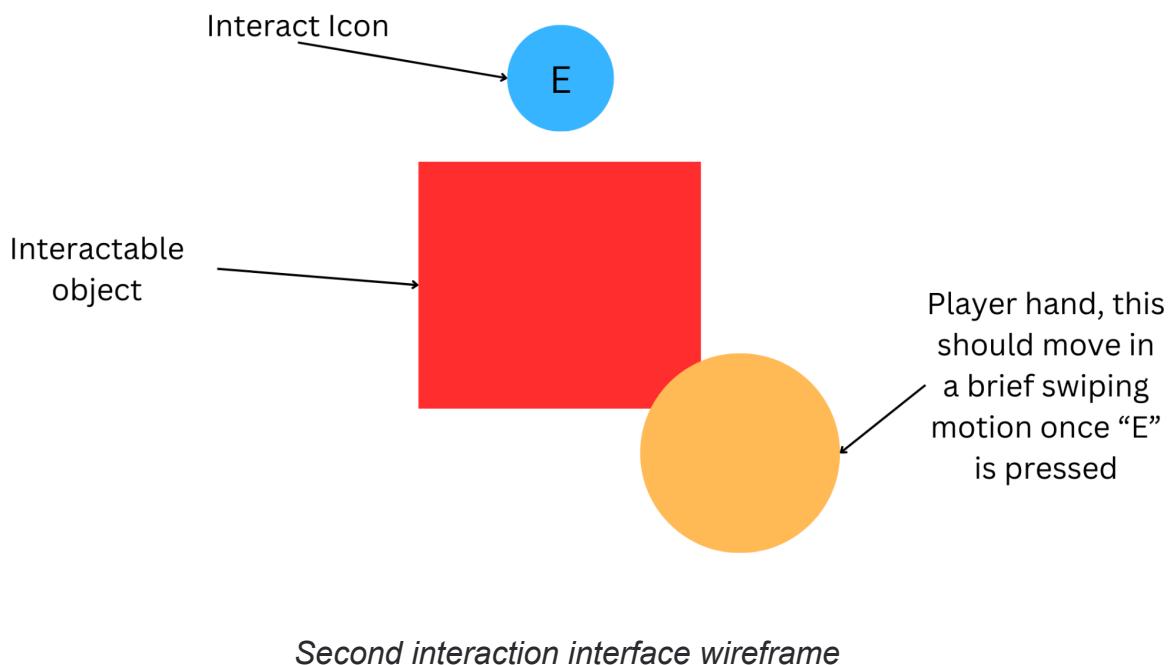
Our main goal with the interaction UI is to let players know when they can and cannot interact with an object as to avoid player confusion. In order to do this we show two small icons above the object players can interact with, one icon showing they can interact with it and the other prompting the player to get closer and enable the interaction. The interaction icons should change based on whether or not the player has met some sort of condition, for example if a door is locked and the player needs a key, a different interaction icon should appear such as a cross to signal that the player has not met a certain criteria. The automatic depth of field camera function ensures that the items players are looking at are in focus, preventing misunderstandings and confusion when the player is near multiple interactable objects. When the player interacts with an interactable object, text will appear around the bottom of the screen which will help voice the characters thoughts, give context or give story clues in a simple way.

Wireframe/UI tests:



Initial interaction interface wireframe

Initially we thought that a crosshair based interaction system would be best with the crosshair becoming visible and emphasised when the players view overlaps with an interactable object. However this approach required a crosshair widget which we found to be very distracting and took away from the experience, the crosshair limits how much the player feels as though they are seeing through Daisy's eyes, potentially damaging our depersonalisation theme.



After rethinking the interaction UI design we created the wireframe above. This interface relied on the player entering the interactable objects sphere radius, upon entering an “E” symbol would appear above the object signalling that the player can interact with it. In order to ground the player and emphasise that they are seeing through Daisy's eyes, once pressing “E” a brief hand swipe animation would play alongside an audio effect to provide feedback to the player and signal that they have picked up/interacted with the object.



The final version of the interaction interface is extremely similar to the second wireframe design. However where it differs is in the image on the left. In the wireframe design the “E” icon would appear when the player entered its radius. However, in the final version we implement a hollow circle interface, this shows the player that they can interact with the object but they are not yet in range to do so providing better clearer feedback to the player on what they can and cannot do. In comparison to the wireframe design, we had to remove the hand swiping/pickup animation due to our lack of assets and technical ability or time to make our own.

Save/checkpoint UI:

Overall design goals:

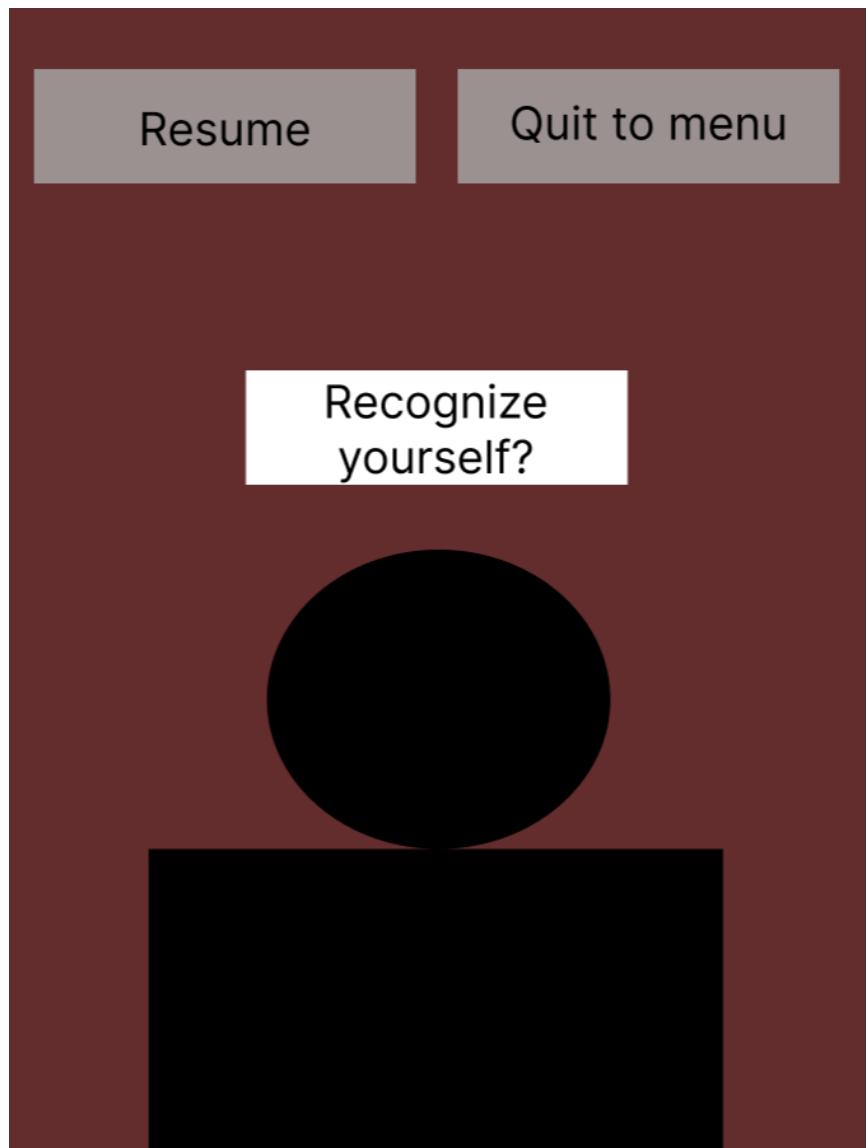
Our overall goal with the checkpoint UI is to again provide players with an extremely simple interface that they can navigate and we can create quickly and with ease. The checkpoint UI should be transparent and placed over the mirror object, the player should be able to constantly see their reflection in the mirror when they use the menu. This is the only place where the player can pause the game and access the

subsequent pause menu. This is done so that more emphasis is placed on the mirrors and the players ability to remember where they are within their mental map of the environment whilst also preventing players from pausing and decreasing tension during horror set pieces, players experience of these set pieces should not possess the ability to be interrupted. These mirrors are distinct from the others through the usage of our interact UI but also in their visual design, these mirrors are cleaner than others in the environment and feature a red border/tint on the mirror itself.

Wireframe/UI tests:

Elements needed:

- Resume
- Quit to menu
- Set checkpoint/rest - This needs an emphasised piece of feedback like an audio effect. Alternatively once the player has set a checkpoint the post processing filter is turned off until the player leaves the mirror alongside their model returning to normal/original and a checkpoint set text (or something similar). Once the player sets it as a checkpoint the filter should be disabled and their model should return to original everytime they interact with that mirror. Before the players model changes the mirror should become foggy in order to hide the model switch taking place.



Final UI wireframe design



Final Menu Mirror UI in game

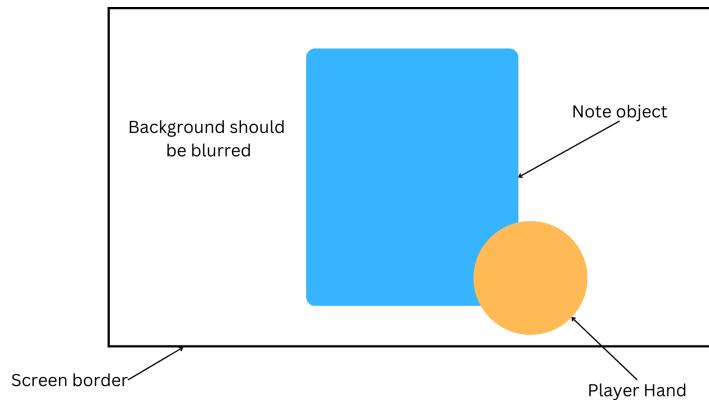
As you can see some slight changes to the wireframe design were made within the final version namely the location of the player. Due to the variable nature of where the player can stand when interacting with the menu mirror it was not always possible to have the player be extremely close however the UI's triangular design ensures that they should always be centered and visible.

Notes UI:

Overall design goals:

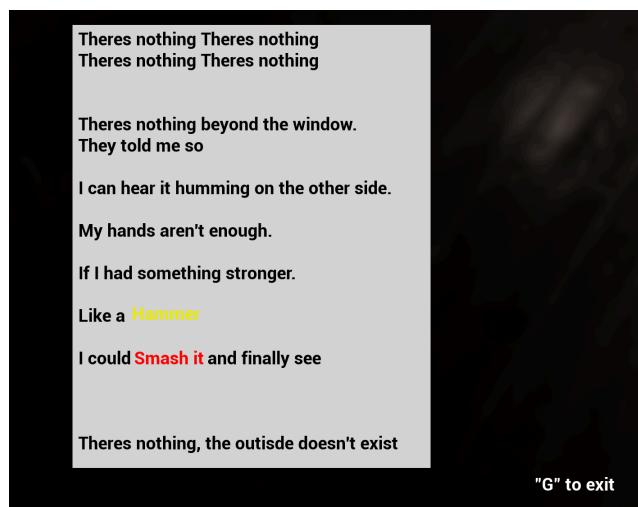
The notes UI should appear similar to other instances found in the industry. The player should be able to read the text clearly and it should be visualised as if the note actually exists in the universe (for example on paper). This could just be an image displayed via a UI canvas. Players should be able drop or escape out of the notes menu easily via the esc key, this transition out should be fast

Wireframe/UI tests:



Initial note UI wireframe

Initially it was important that Daisy's hand was visible within the note interface in order to ground the player and create a physical link between them and the note UI widget. This hand would also change each time the player looks into a mirror to help further the theme of depersonalization through the player not recognising the hand holding the paper. The blurred background was also extremely important in ensuring players are not distracted by the environment behind and can instead focus their full attention on the note.



Final note UI

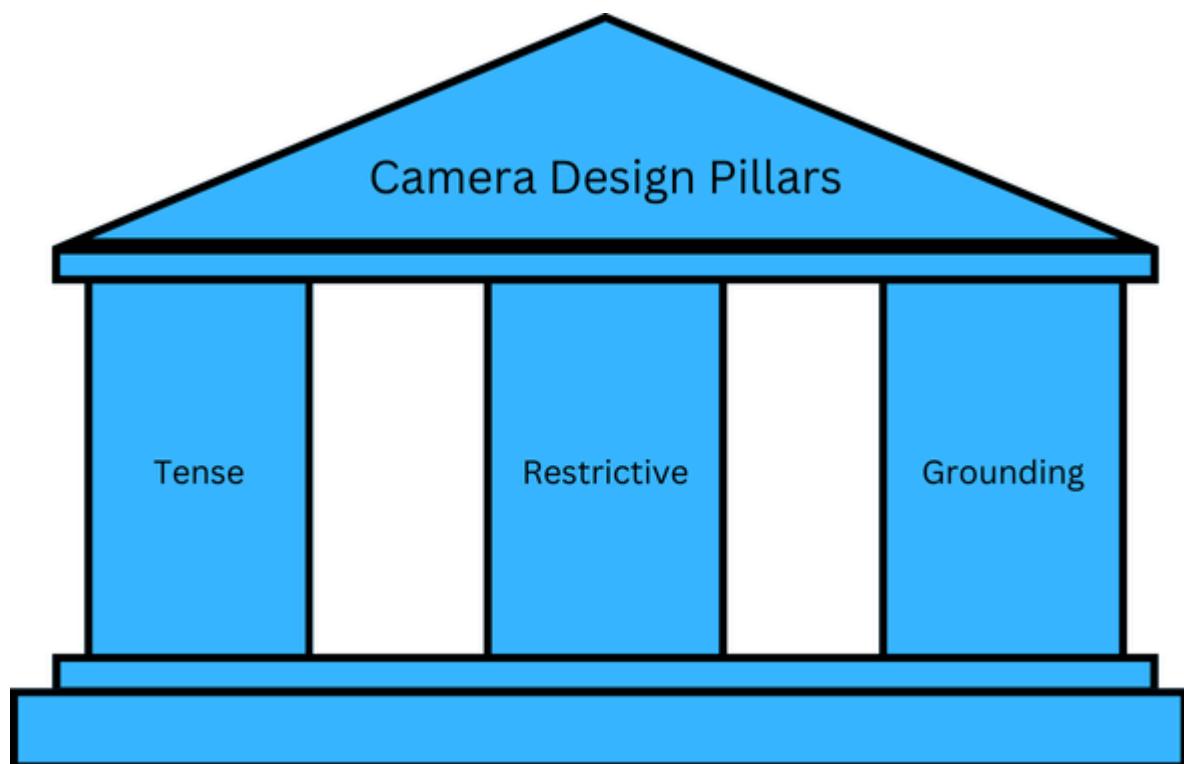
As you can see from the image above the UI was changed quite heavily in the final version in comparison to the wireframe designs. To start the characters hand is not present, we found this to be too great of a technical and programming challenge considering our lack of assets and animations. Furthermore, we decided to remove the hand since it gave us less room to display text. However, much like the wireframe designs we did blur the environment in the background allowing players to focus fully on the note and its contents. Additionally, we decided to highlight critical information like objectives with items being highlighted in yellow and actions the player will need to carry out being highlighted in red.

Camera Design:

Design Philosophy:

The main design goal/philosophy behind the camera design is to create a restrictive point of view and create tension through that restriction. Players should not be able to see an entire environment or room straight away they need to get closer to objects and environment elements to see them more clearly. Furthermore, the camera should further emphasise the disorientating and detached feelings that DDD causes through gameplay segments and special effects/filters placed over it. The camera should make the player feel uncomfortable before anything actually happens in the game. Much like other elements of the game the camera should also follow a design by subtraction philosophy.

Design Pillars:



Perspective:

Players will be placed in a first person perspective for the length of the experience. This allows us to put the player in the characters shoes and create a camera that feels restrictive and intimate with other elements of the game such as environments and enemies aiding in furthering the overall horror and tension of our experience. Much like other first person games the player can control the camera using their mouse. The sensitivity of this movement should be slightly lower than standard first person experiences like Call of Duty and Battlefield to help add to the players restriction and create an experience that feels slower without the need for twitchy and responsive mechanical abilities.

We want the camera to feel more realistic and loose to help simulate and further emphasise the players movements whilst also adding character to the camera functions and thus Daisy. This loose feeling camera also helps to make the player feel more defenseless and weak through the cameras lack of fine tuned precision in other first person experiences like Call of Duty and Halo serving to emphasise and continue our exploration of the games themes and the emotions we want players to feel.

Effects/movement:

Head bob - Weak and slow head bob effect to simulate characters movement and ground the player in the experience further. This head bob effect should match the players speed, meaning when they start sprinting it should be more noticeable and slightly faster

Automatic depth of field - We also employ an automatic depth of field camera effect that slightly blurs objects outside of the players focus. This helps to ground the player whilst also subtly aiding in restricting their view and adding to the discomfort of our experience. Players will not have a perfect view of threats or the environment if they try to subtly peek around a corner. The auto depth of field also allows us to show the player what item they are going to interact with by blurring all others around it, helping to establish what the player can do in the game world without the need for a more apparent interface element.

Camera shake - When the players line of sight intersects with the enemy or during scripted sequences there should be a noticeable camera shake. This shake should be unique and appear more like the shake in the video linked here: [.Interesting As Fuck on Twitter / X](#). This helps make our enemy and their effect on the player feel more unique and impactful.

Desaturation - A slight desaturation filter should also be placed over the players camera. This works in tandem with the noise/grain filter to further develop and emphasise the disorientating effects of DDD. Whilst the game should appear more desaturated, players should still be able to make out colours albeit with less clarity. The only colour that should not be effected by the filter is red so that it stands out and we can further emphasise its importance

Vignette - The player's camera should have a very slight vignette around it to limit the players view slightly and create a darker look adding the the creepy elements of the game. This effect should increase during scripted enemy sequences. This could also increase when the player starts running however the effect should be different.

FOV- After researching other game's in the genre, we have found that between 50-100 FOV is common for horror games. We use an FOV of 80, bringing the camera in slightly ensures that players feel a sense of claustrophobia and disorientation without causing them to lose too much of their vision, prevents a fish eye effect and limits motion sickness by only reducing the FOV slightly.

Second person segments:

During specific scripted segments of the game players will be switched into a second person perspective temporarily in order to emphasise and further our themes of DDD through the cameras now detached nature. We can use this trick well when the player looks into a checkpoint mirror. By having them look in first person, then during the menu transition, detaching the camera from the player model and leaving it floating we can make it look as though the player is on the other side of the mirror watching themself. This can then be linked with another scripted segment or level set piece to increase pacing intensity.

The second person segments should be used sparingly as overusing them diminishes their effect. Furthermore the segments should be short as to not disorient or annoy the player too much, they should be used as ways to shock or confuse the player before transitioning into another scene or gameplay set piece.

(These sequences were removed from the game shortly before submission however the documentation will remain to show our process and what we initially designed)

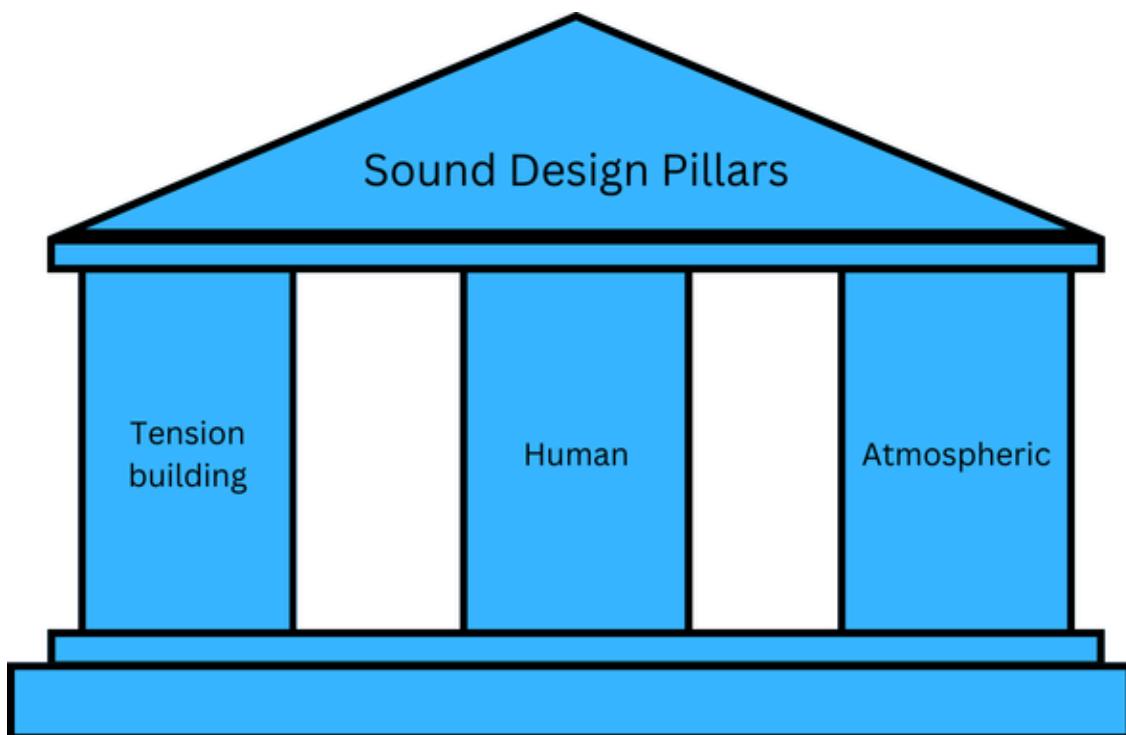
Sound and Music

Design:

Design Philosophy:

Our main goal/philosophy behind the design of our sound effects and audio is to create a tense and foreboding atmosphere. We will rely on audio and its worldbuilding effects predominantly to help scare players and increase tension more so than our usage of other standard horror elements such as enemies. Sounds should be unsettling and work alongside the players imagination as a creator of fear. Music should have a human sound in order to create the surreal and melancholic soundscape we desire.

Design Pillars:



Enemy Audio usage:

Enemy audio should be used to heighten the player's fear of the enemy through associating music with the enemy and its scripted attack sequences. The enemy music should be high intensity and human or ethereal sounding, creating a feeling as though the player is underwater or consumed by the sound. This is important as it will help disorient the player especially during intense enemy encounters. The music we use for enemy encounters can be listened to below:

[Zero-G - Cuckooland Vol.2 Ghost In the Machine - Hoovering On Venus](#)

The unnatural sound helps us build tension but also from a narrative and thematic view it allows us to show how unnatural and intrinsic the enemy is to Daisy and thus the player, it is something within them and less of a physical or tangible obstacle

Trauma section audio usage

Trauma section audio should be unorganized, unpredictable and intense. Players should struggle to figure out what they are actually hearing. During these sections we should use a loud and haunting ambient track behind the trauma audio. This trauma audio can be reused from the intro however it should feel far more haunting and disturbing. The audio should make the player feel extremely uncomfortable during these sections through the audios human sounding elements such as screaming. We use multiple different tracks and sounds across the trauma sequences in order to achieve the previously mentioned effects.

UI/main menu audio

When within UI like the main menu there should be a slow human sounding track playing. This should feel melancholic, not scary but also not relaxing. This audio

should be quite sad, almost as if the main character is reflecting on their life before the game begins. On top of this there should be a tactile and deep sounding audio sample that plays when the player selects or hovers over an UI element to ensure the players is given understandable feedback. The audio present in the main menu should not be played when the player pauses or accesses their inventory. Accessing these UI elements should not give the player a break in the loneliness or tension built through the soundscape. They should not be given any form of respite mid way through gameplay.

Mirror/checkpoint audio

The mirror/checkpoint music should be the opposite of the rest of the soundscape providing players with a safe refuge. This offers them a break in pacing especially after a high intensity segment such as the enemy chase sequences. This also helps reduce the fatigue players feel by offering them a pause in the gameplay loop. This audio could be compared to Serenity from RE4, Fire link Shrine from Dark Souls or heal from Ico. It should create and achieve the same effect over the player through its scarce usage and availability with the audio only being played when the player is looking into a saving mirror.

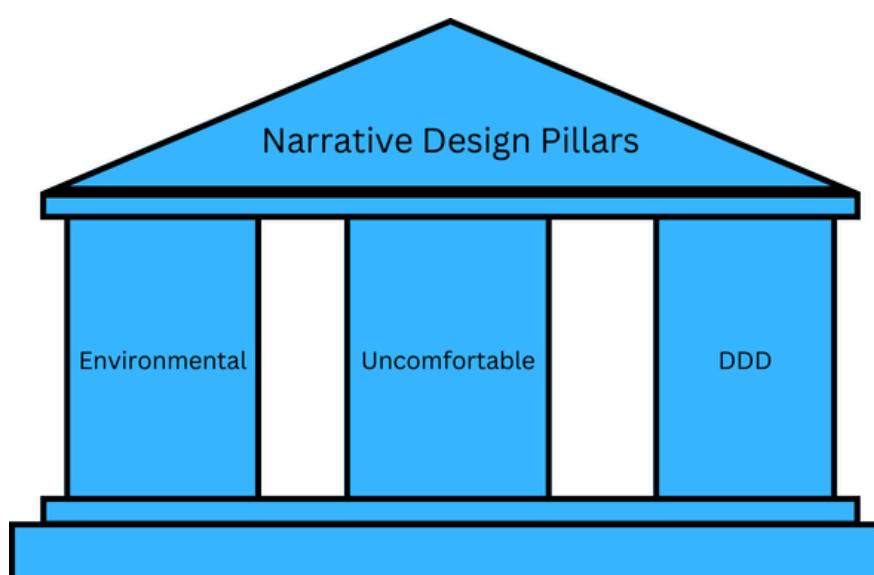
Narrative Design:

Design Philosophy:

Our main goal/philosophy regarding narrative design is to create a narrative experience that is abstract and/or subtractive. This narrative should be not be told explicitly via standard story telling techniques such as cutscenes or dialog. It should instead be told through the environment (such as mirrors, notes and the use of the colour red) to create a story that feels intriguing, rewarding and intrinsic relying on the players attention to detail and media literacy skills. The narrative should make the player feel uncomfortable through multiple elements such as the environment, character backstory and theme, this is also how we create horror through the traumatic experience the narrative is based around/on.

Every aspect of the game ranging from player to UI design is centred around our narrative theme of DDD meaning that everything in the game should reflect what the protagonist feels/is experiencing. This further links to our overall design by subtraction philosophy, anything that does not link to this theme does not need to be in the game.

Design Pillars:



Themes:

Our main narrative theme is DDD or depersonalization-derealization disorder. Being our main theme, all elements of the game are designed around it to help create an experience that feels consistent and allows players to experience an extreme version of the disorder. We explore this theme through many different avenues in our design however there are five primary ways that we reflect our theme in gameplay. These being: mirrors, the usage of red, faceless main character, enemy and finally environment/level design (these points will be explored throughout this document)

Alongside our main theme we have multiple sub themes that help to create a more impactful and resonant narrative. These sub themes being:

- Loneliness
- Fear of decision making
- lack of control / being controlled
- Anxiety
- Suicide
- Existentialism

These themes are explored differently across the game, importantly they should not overshadow the main theme but should still be a present element. For example, our game is not about loneliness however it should be apparent through the atmosphere and desolate environments we create.

Character backstory/profile:

The protagonist of the game is Daisy, a woman who has just escaped from a physically and emotionally abusive relationship of 5 years. She lives in the UK but has always wanted to move to California and leave her relationship behind. She works a low income office job and now lives alone. The game is set 1 year after the relationship ended. Daisy, as a result of the trauma, has developed DDD

(depersonalization-derealization disorder) amongst other mental health issues such as suicidal tendencies and anxiety. Although she wants to go to work and lead a normal life, the trauma caused by her past catches up to her, affecting her normal routine.



Our chosen player model

We chose this to be Daisy's primary player model due to the model's simplicity. A model whose appearance is too complex and unnatural would overshadow our game's themes of depersonalisation through the distraction the visuals provide but also in how unique the model is. Having the model be unique makes it easy for players to remember what they look like/who they are, we wanted to avoid this as much as possible to help make the player also feel as though they are suffering with DDD just like Daisy. Furthermore, the simplistic design of our model leads to the character feeling more realistic and resonating stronger with players.

Motivations/character objective:

Long term character goal - Daisy wants to leave the UK and travel to California in search of a better life and a way to leave the trauma caused by her relationship behind.

Player/character short term narrative goal - Player (and Daisy by extension) need to carry out their daily routine such as getting ready for work, travelling and actually working. However, the player is prevented from doing this due to the extremely strong DDD episodes that they suffer. Players and Daisy need to try and push past this to try and lead a normal life

Setting:

Story is set within the UK. The setting of individual levels change across the game however they are all still set within the UK and link to different points in Daisy's routine. The level settings are as follows:

- Level 1, House - set within Daisy's house. Set around Autumn/Winter time.
- Level 2, Forest - set in a forest not far from Daisy's house, it is on her way to work
- Level 3, Office - set in Daisy's office workplace
- Level 4, Train - set on a train and station. around winter time. late night train.

Level transitions:

When transitioning between levels we should use a unified transition to keep the game consistent. This transition should be a freeze frame showing 2 key elements: the date and the environment. There are multiple different ways that we can show the date such as a paper calendar, phone calendar etc however these two elements must be included and must be extremely noticeable.

To further unify the transitions and increase consistency, the calendar could always be on the left, taking up 1/3 of the frame whilst the environment is on the right and taking up 2/3 of the shot. The camera should be close to the calendar and the environment should appear distant.

Calendar dates should change between the levels to show that there has been a jump in time. The character's disorder is not just a 1 week occurrence, it is consistent

across many months. Further emphasises our DDD themes and the severity of the disorder



Freeze frame shots could appear similar to this

Notes:

The notes are small environment elements that can be picked up and read. They should sound as though they have been written by Daisy in both appearance and dialog. The notes have multiple uses for the player. Some may expand upon how Daisy feels, her abusive relationship or her daily life. Others may provide players with hints towards solving puzzles, some may be the puzzle itself.

They should look handwritten and scrappy with poor handwriting and tattered/ripped edges.

Usage of Red:

Red is our symbolic/metaphorical colour, we use it across the game consistently to expand upon narrative elements and the theme of DDD through environmental changes and implications.

Throughout the game, the colour red increases all around the player from the amount of red on their clothes (t-shirt), to how much is in the environment. It should be more noticeable than other colours with red being dominant and all other colours being washed out through the use of a post processing shader. This reflects the DDD, depression and other mental health factors taking a toll on Daisy's wellbeing and life, leaving her with a hazy, undefined outlook on reality. The usage of red should be subtle in the beginning of each level, blending into normal objects like paintings however as the level continues and pacing intensity increases red should bleed onto objects that may not typically be red such as stone pillars, walls etc.

Red is also used in gameplay to indicate and warn players of increased enemy frequency/scripted events.



Our usage of red is similar to its usage in Perfect Blue

Usage of mirrors:

Mirrors are an essential environment detail, it is the main way that we show and expand upon our DDD theme. Mirrors should be the most common environment element appearing consistently in all of the levels. Many who suffer with DDD do not recognize themselves when looking into a mirror, feeling as though they are not actually looking at themselves. We reference this in our game through the consistency of the mirrors but also the players interaction with them. Each time the player interacts with a mirror, especially during intense sequences, the player model in the mirror will change or become extremely distorted to try and simulate this feeling many have. The characters faceless nature also links to the usage of mirrors and overall feelings of not recognising yourself due to the lack of extremely defining features like a nose, eyes, mouth etc

Furthermore, mirrors are used by players to see the enemy. The enemy can only be seen within these mirrors. This further emphasises that the enemy is a part of the characters subconscious that they do not recognise anymore due to the trauma they have experienced. Furthermore, the enemy only being noticeable through mirrors implies and suggests that the enemy is an internal struggle within the character as mirrors are often used to reflect the self or how someone feels within media and real life.

Enemy:

The enemy in our game is a part of the character that they no longer recognise due to the abusive trauma they have experienced. This is shown through the enemy's model being exactly the same as the players except shrouded in a shadowy mist. Importantly, players should be able to recognise that the enemy is them immediately to help further our themes of DDD, players know it is them but don't recognise it or feel as though they are that. The enemy should also not act as a threat to the player for most of the experience, whilst there are sequences of the game where the enemy directly opposes the player for the most part the player should feel as though they

are being stalked by the enemy. It is a constant negative element of their mental health that lingers and follows them throughout their day.

Symbolic objects:

The symbolic objects are another way that we communicate and convey our themes of DDD and trauma. These objects (specifics still to be determined) should visible and emphasised in the intro, they must stand out from the background and other environment elements so that the player takes notice of them and can recognise them later in the game. The objects should all link to different aspects/moments in Daisy's relationship/life.

During the trauma sequences of the game, players will need to confront these trauma objects. This triggers the trauma sequence mentioned elsewhere in this document. Players need to ensure these trauma sequences to "defeat" the object and collect it. Players will then use all of the trauma objects they have collected to power the train at the end, implying that Daisy has beat some of her trauma and is using it to power/move towards a new life.

Trauma section:

The trauma sections are the primary way that we explore and expand upon Daisy's trauma. Here the player will be shown or listen to the traumatic event tied to the symbolic object present in the room. These sections should be short however they need to be extremely intense, fast paced and uncomfortable for the player. They should take advantage of the player's gameplay state to enhance the discomfort players feel, for example, a room could shrink or fill up with water each time the player interacts with the object. These sections rely on fast paced flashing imagery

and audio to tell and explore our story/the trauma behind the object, there should not be a cutscene here.

These sequences take heavy inspiration from similar scenes in Neon Genesis Evangelion. Here is an example:

[Asuka Confronts Arael](#)



Visual style and aesthetics:

Design Philosophy:

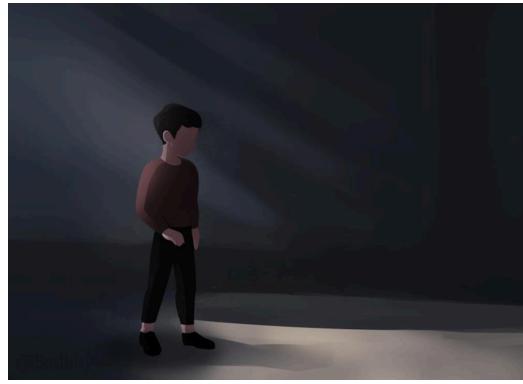
The main goal of our visual style is to expand upon the themes/narrative of the game through visual means, creating a more consistent and cohesive experience for players. The visuals should further the themes in every aspect of their design. There should be a clear synergy between the visuals, the narrative, the gameplay and the audio. Overall, our visual aesthetic is grey and surreal helping transport players into the world of someone suffering with DDD.

Player visual design:

- 3 defining features (hair style, T-shirt colour and facial scar)
- Clothing colour slowly changes throughout the game to reflect the increased use of red
- Very simple design (similar to limbo and inside)



Players model should channel the same fear as this image however less grotesque and simpler



Inside's main character serves as inspiration for our character.

Enemy visual design:

- exact same model as player model with slight changes
- shadowy, misty (similar to shadow of the colossus)
- player should be able to recognise them from their silhouette being so similar to their characters



Enemy visual design could appear similar to the shadow creatures from SOTC

Environment visual design:

- Environments should appear washed out/hazy to help further our theme of DDD by simulating the brain fog and disorientation that comes with it. Whilst the environment should appear washed out, this effect should be weak, players need to be able to tell what colours they are looking at easily. Red should not be affected by the desaturated/washed out look at all to help further cement its importance.

- Red should be a consistent colour throughout the environment however its frequency should change as levels progress and pace increases. In the beginning of the level red should be a subtle colour in the environment, blending into the background through normal objects like paintings, alarm clocks etc. As pacing increases this red should bleed into the environment more, turning objects that are not typically red into the colour. For example, the floor or even UI elements like the pause menu and inventory menu.

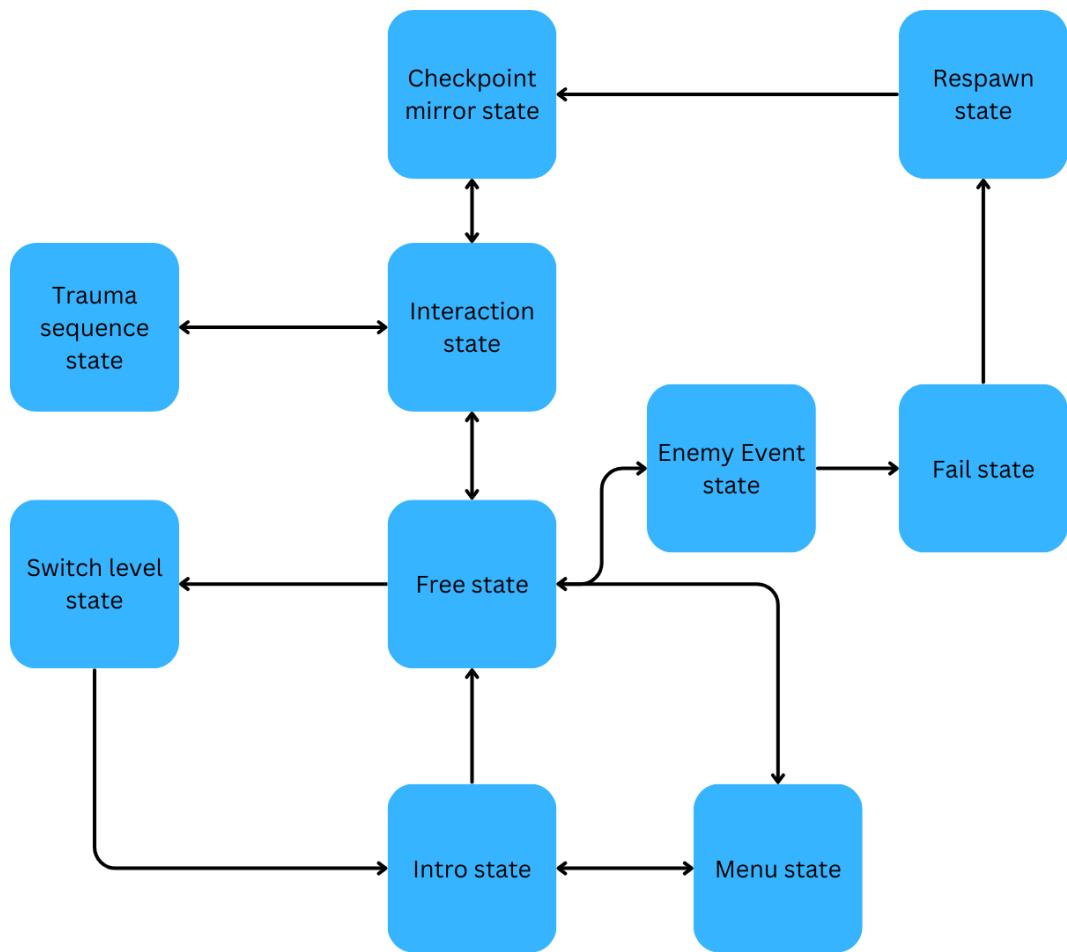
Game states:

Game states:

Games states are used to track what state the player is in, usually aiding us in understanding the verb or action the player is completing or the element of the game the player is currently interacting with. Below you can find a list of all the game states within The Me In The Mirror as well as a diagram showing how they all link together.

- **Intro/transition state** - When within this state the player is shown a short freeze frame of the environment before gameplay begins
- **Interaction state** - This is a brief state the player is transitioned into every time they press the interact button, this usually leads to a verb or action being carried out within the environment
- **Checkpoint/mirror state** - This state signals when the player is looking into the save mirror and/or saving their progress. When within this state the game is paused
- **Fail state** - This state signals when the player has died to the enemy, the respawn state will always follow after
- **Respawn state** - This state signals that the player is respawning/has just respawned at the menu/checkpoint mirror
- **Free state** - This state signals that the player is in free gameplay, moving around the environment etc. They will be in this state for majority of the experience
- **Menu state** - This state signals when the player is within the main menu, pause menu or any other user interface that appears and pauses gameplay
- **Switch level state** - This state signals that the player is transitioning or has just transitioned into a new map/level
- **Trauma sequence state** - This state signals that the player is within a trauma sequence and the subsequent trauma video is playing on their screen
- **Enemy event state** - This state signals that the player has triggered and is within an enemy event such as being chased or triggering an enemy to spawn

The diagram below illustrates how each state interacts with one another. The arrows and their direction show how the interaction flows, if the arrow is double sided the interaction can go back and forth.



Game state interaction diagram