

Game Design Document (GDD) – *Echoes of the Observer*

Genre: Cinematic Narrative Experience · Interactive Art Game
Engine: Unreal Engine 5 (UE5)
Developer: Danila Sergienko
Estimated Completion: August 29, 2025
Milestone: 1 – Foundation and Core Prototype
Demo: ../Media/FullGameLoop.mp4

Overview

Echoes of the Observer is a short-form poetic game that blends cinematic storytelling, symbolic exploration, and reactive music-driven interaction. The player progresses through four symbolic acts, each representing a psychological or emotional transformation.

The experience draws inspiration from *Solaris*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Journey*, and *Inside*, emphasizing audiovisual immersion, minimalist input, and mood over challenge.

Narrative Structure

Each act is designed as a metaphorical environment tied to a specific emotional theme. Player agency varies by act – from exploration to musical interaction to passive observation.

Act	Title	Setting	Gameplay Mechanic
I	Montreal / The Awakening	Futuristic cityscape	Third-person exploration: Find a hidden key and activate a launch platform
II	Spacecraft / The Isolation	Sterile capsule in space	Typing mechanic: Type the word “LOVE” in rhythm to progress
III	Space Station Traverse	Interior of a massive station	Basic navigation: Walk through the space station to a destination (placeholder)

IV	The Room / The Becoming	Kubrick-style white chamber	Cinematic-only: Passive, symbolic visual sequence leading to menu reset
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Core Gameplay Loop

1. **Launch game at Main Menu**
 2. **Start Game** button loads Act I
 3. **Act I:** Player explores, finds key, activates launch platform
 4. **Act II:** Cinematic transition into typing-based music mechanic
 5. **Act III:** Simple walk-through space station environment
 6. **Act IV:** Cinematic-only sequence
 7. **Return to Main Menu** upon ending sequence
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Gameplay Mechanics

Exploration (Act I)

- Third-person movement
- Interact with world objects
- Complete objective: Find and use a key to activate launch platform

Typing Rhythm (Act II)

- Player types a specific word ("LOVE")
- Each key press triggers a Metasound note

- Player must maintain rhythm (~110 BPM)
- Mistyped letters play dissonant notes
- Typing speed is visualized with a BPM speedometer

Spatial Navigation (Act III)

- No active input mechanic
- Walk from one point to another
- Placeholder for potential vehicle control or puzzle in future milestone

Cinematic Resolution (Act IV)

- Player enters a white symbolic space
 - Passive viewing only
 - Ends with return to main menu
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Audio & Metasound System

- Custom **Metasound graphs** generate interactive audio based on typing
 - Audio speeds up with typing BPM, using **pitch + delay compensation**
 - Each letter has a distinct tonal signature
 - Background ambient layers vary by scene
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Current Development Progress (Milestone 1 Complete)

Feature	Status
Project initialized	Completed
Main menu with Start/Exit	Completed
Transition from menu to game level	Completed
Return to menu at end of sequence	Completed
Level transition logic	Completed
Basic Metasound typing logic (Act II)	In progress / functional
Typing speedometer feedback	Functional
Placeholder environment & sequences	Completed
Final cinematic fade out	Functional
Narrative scripting for all acts	Drafted / Evolving

Planned Next Steps (Milestone 2+)

- Enhance Metasound accuracy and layering
- Add post-processing and VFX feedback for typing
- Replace placeholder environment (Act III) with more active or meaningful traversal
- Add fade transitions between all acts
- Expand final cinematic with symbolic visual payoff
- Refine GDD and reflection logs based on milestone testing