

Borrowed Clarity

Everything is out of your control,
eating becomes the only lever...

This isn't a story about dieting. It's a VR experience designed to break down biases about **eating disorders**. When all the world's buttons fail, the player grasps the only thing offering positive feedback: food. Swallowing brings fleeting clarity and reward, revealing how loss of control becomes disguised as perfectionism.

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Background Research

Among eating disorders, anorexia nervosa is the mental illness with the highest mortality rate, and it also holds the highest mortality rate among all psychological disorders.



In China

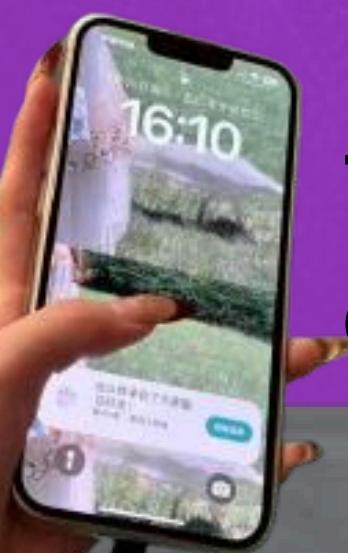
2.1 million

Treasure, Duarte, and Schmidt (2020) describe eating disorders as “disabling, deadly, and costly”.

Beyond the influence of distorted aesthetics, they stem more from pressure and control within their families of origin.

One person dies every hour.

I am also a long-term sufferer of anorexia, and my weight is 35kg.



In the psychiatric ward, I've encountered many patients with anorexia nervosa. Their condition is severe—some have stopped menstruating, developed electrolyte imbalances, pancreatitis, or heart failure.

When people dismiss anorexia as mere “obsession with beauty,” what I hear is society's lazy attribution of suffering.

Research Methods

I conducted on-site visits to the three best psychiatric hospitals in Beijing.



At the hospital with the highest number of anorexia patients, I found that the majority were young women. Anorexia was always accompanied by other mental health conditions.

Interview

What are the first three words that spring to mind when you first hear the term “anorexia”?

Ask the public

Tags: Beauty obsession, body image anxiety, perfectionism, excessive concern with others' opinions, heartbreak, vanity

If we were to treat “not eating” as a language, what might it be saying on your behalf?

Keywords: control within the family of origin, sense of control, painkillers, freedom, addiction.

Ask the patient

Design rationale

What I want to criticize is the bias that simplifies anorexia to "love of beauty," "wanting to be thin," or "perfectionism."

My proposed perspective: many other causes, especially "lack of a sense of control" and environmental stress.

Game Goal

- A Let players feel out of control during the experience, rather than being told they are out of control.
- B Players develop a dependence on and are tempted by the reward mechanism.
- C In the final void, players realize that the compulsion to eat is not the way out of life.

Mechanism Mapping Table

	Internal State	Rule / Constrain	Sensory Output	Critical Reflection
Unresponsive World	Increased sense of loss of control: unresponsive environment, ineffective actions	Touching non-food items always brings negative feedback.	Object distortion/ dispersion; screen jitter; controller vibration; negative sound effects.	Out of control by the environment. People are compelled to seek smaller, more certain points of control.
Swallowed Clarity	Finding controllable points amidst anxiety: a yearning for stability and clarity	Only when "swallowing food" does clarity return.	Blurry to clear transition; positive sound effects and dialogue; positive vibration	Clarity and a sense of control are treated as rewards
Progress as Compliance	Dependency formation: Treating swallowing as the only way to gain a sense of existence	The plot only progresses when the threshold is reached (eating 5 items will advance to Scene 2).	Counting; transition sound effects	Complex pain is compressed into a quantifiable action.
Repetition	Automatic repeat: Returning to a familiar scene and continuing to use "rewards" to save oneself.	Return to the same room layout but with changed rules (but the players will play as before).	The scene felt familiar, but something felt off.	Once you learn a certain understanding, you ignore the deeper reasons.
Void	Thinking they'd found the optimal solution: pursuing "the right food/ the right choice".	Eating five foods triggers the void (reward mechanism collapses).	Falling into darkness, interaction disabled.	Repeated rewards are not an exit, but a loop; the "correct answer" itself is a trap.

Timeline



Finally
plunged into
darkness

Play the final
lines in the
dark

Design process

scene1



First, connect the XR, then establish interaction and add a pair of animated hand models.

```
// Header("8") Debug"]
public bool debugLog = true;

// ===== 内部状态 =====
private bool _hasTriggered;
private float _nextAllowedTime;
private XRBSelectable _bound;
private Vector3 _camBaseLocalPos;
private bool _camBaseCaptured;

// Food counter: 全局计数 (同一场景里所有食物共享)
private static int s_foodEatenCount = 0;

// Renderer[Material] 缓存
private Renderer[] _renderers;
private Dictionary<Renderer, Color[]> _originalColors = new Dictionary<Renderer, Color[]>();
private MaterialPropertyBlock _mpb;

void Awake()
{
    _mpb = new MaterialPropertyBlock();
    CacheRenderers();
    BindInteractableIfNeeded();
    AutoSetCameraShakeTargetIfNeeded();

    // 新增: 自动找 SceneTransitioner (不影响其它功能)
    if (transitioner == null) transitioner = FindObjectOfType<SceneTransitioner>();
}

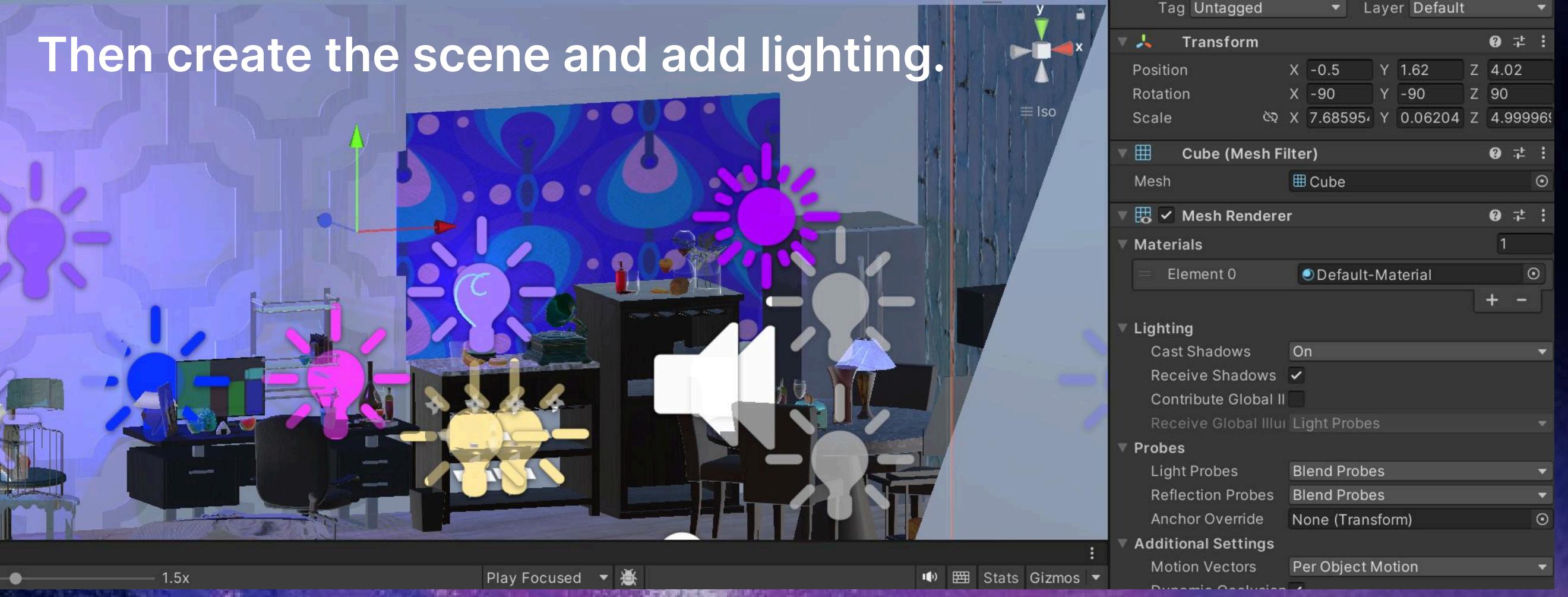
void OnEnable()
{
    BindInteractableIfNeeded();
    SubscribeEvents(true);
}

void OnDisable()
{
    SubscribeEvents(false);
}

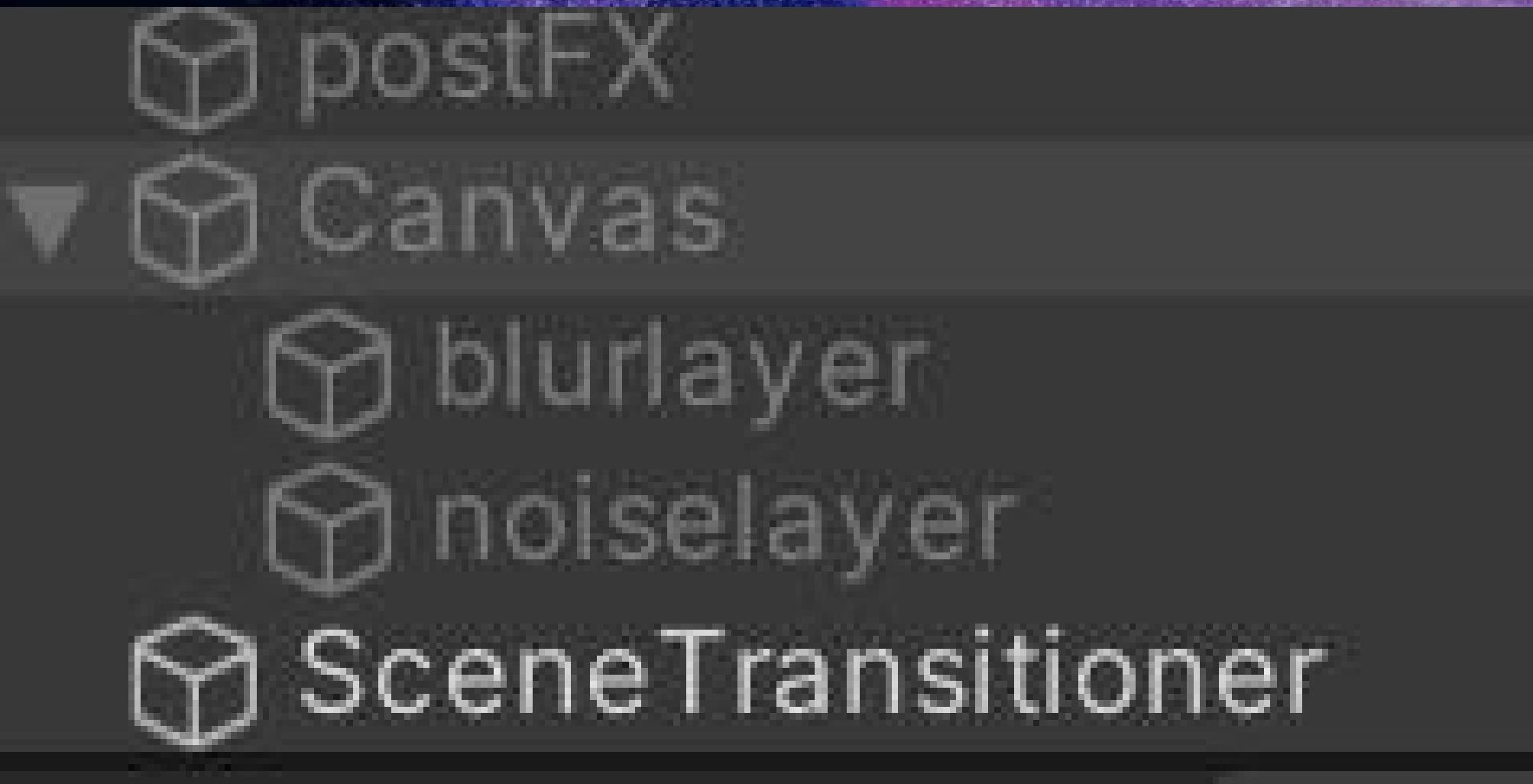
void CacheRenderers()
{
    _renderers = hideChildrenRenderers
        ? GetComponentsInChildren<Renderer>(true)
        : new Renderer[] { GetComponent<Renderer>() };

    _originalColors.Clear();
    foreach (var r in _renderers)
    {
        var colors = new Color[_originalColors.Count];
        for (int i = 0; i < colors.Length; i++)
            colors[i] = _originalColors[i];
        _originalColors[r] = colors;
    }
}
```

Add interactive scripts, then bind them one by one.



Then create the scene and add lighting.



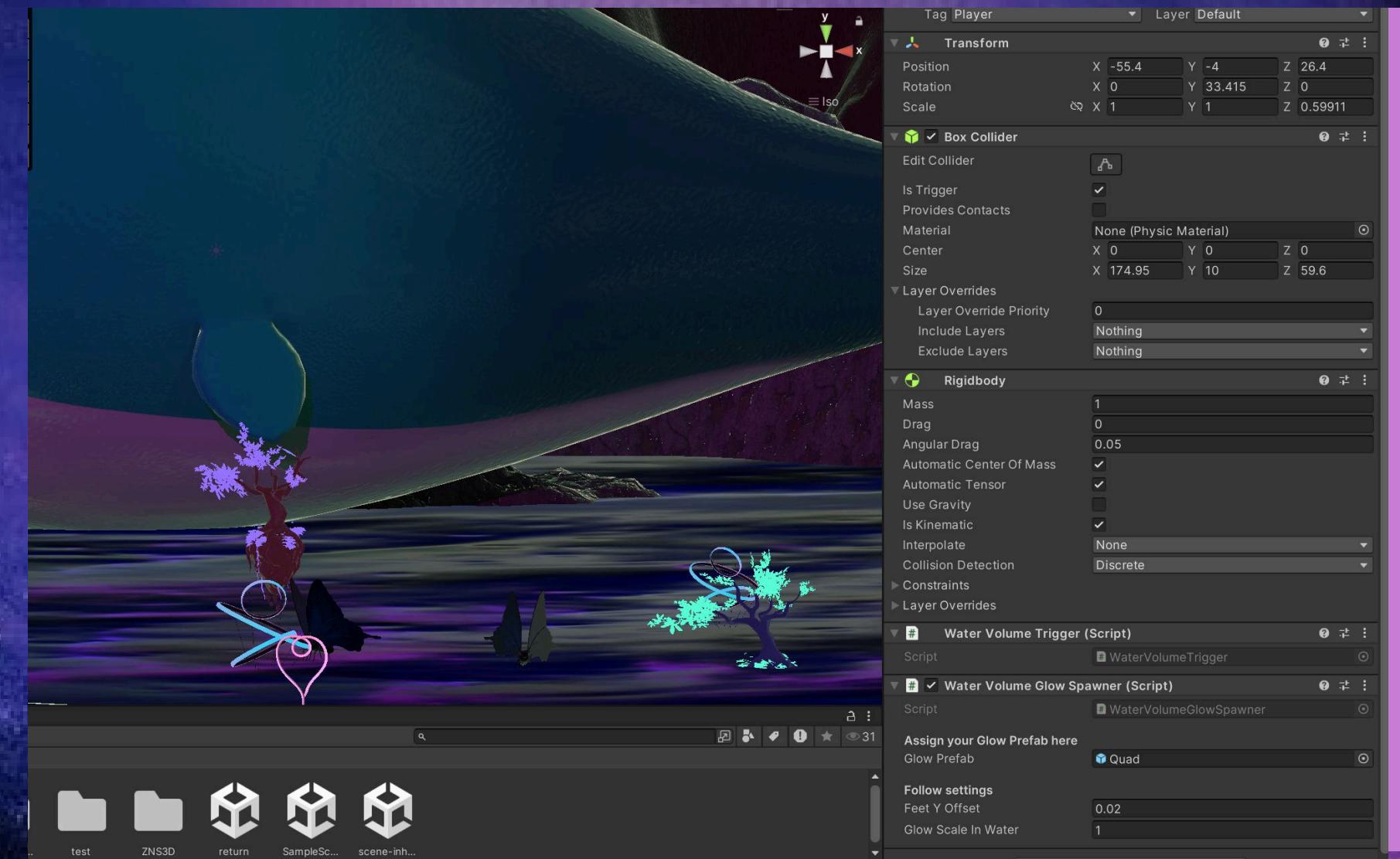
Add a blur effect and write the script.

Design process

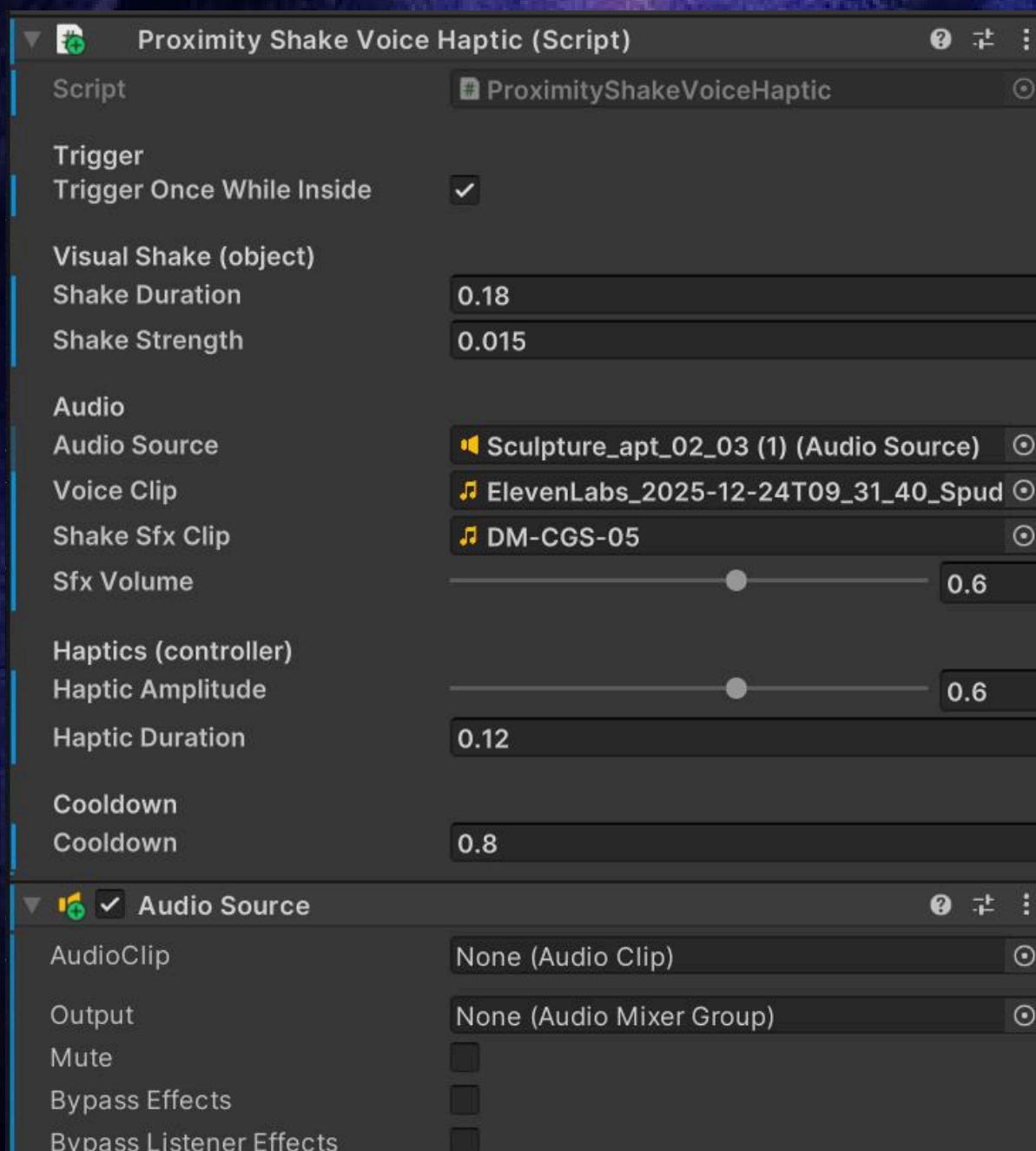
scene2



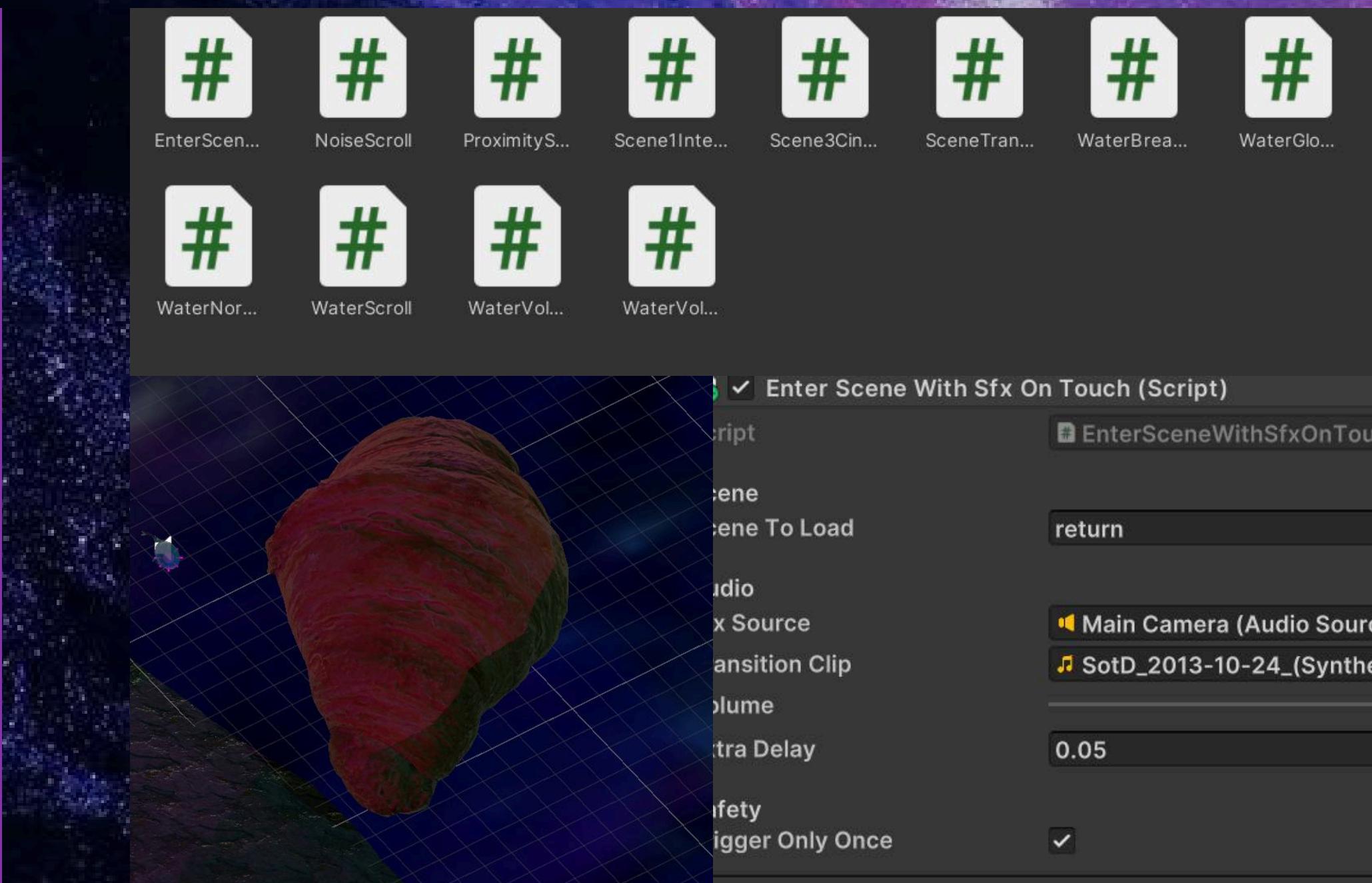
Particle effects:
Create a
following
footwork effect.



Create a scene and
build a water system.
Write a script to make
the water move and
glow. Then write
another script to
make stars appear in
the sky.



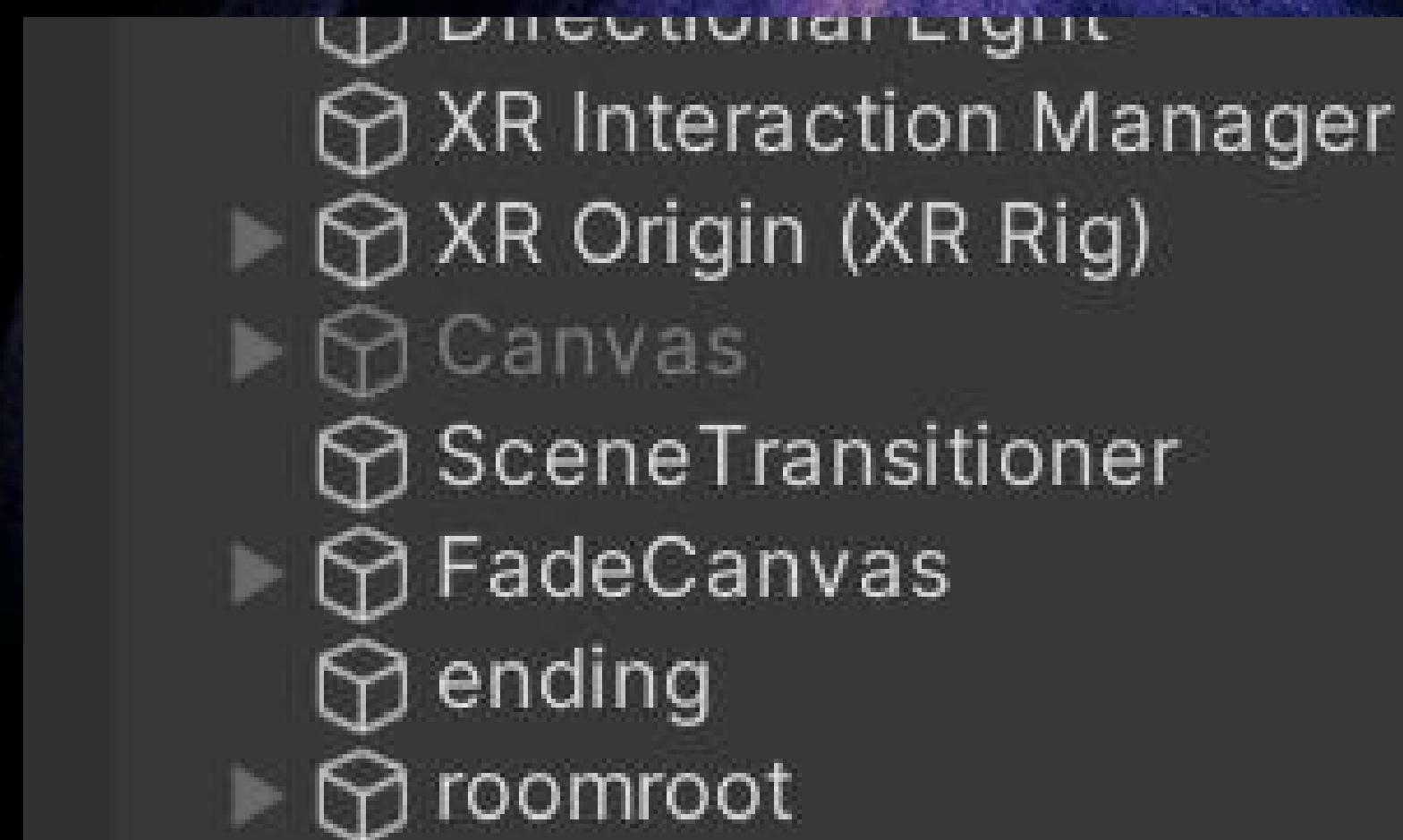
Write a
script to
add
interactive
feedback
and
dialogue to
objects in
the scene.



Write a script for
the target object
to create
transitions and
add transition
sound effects.

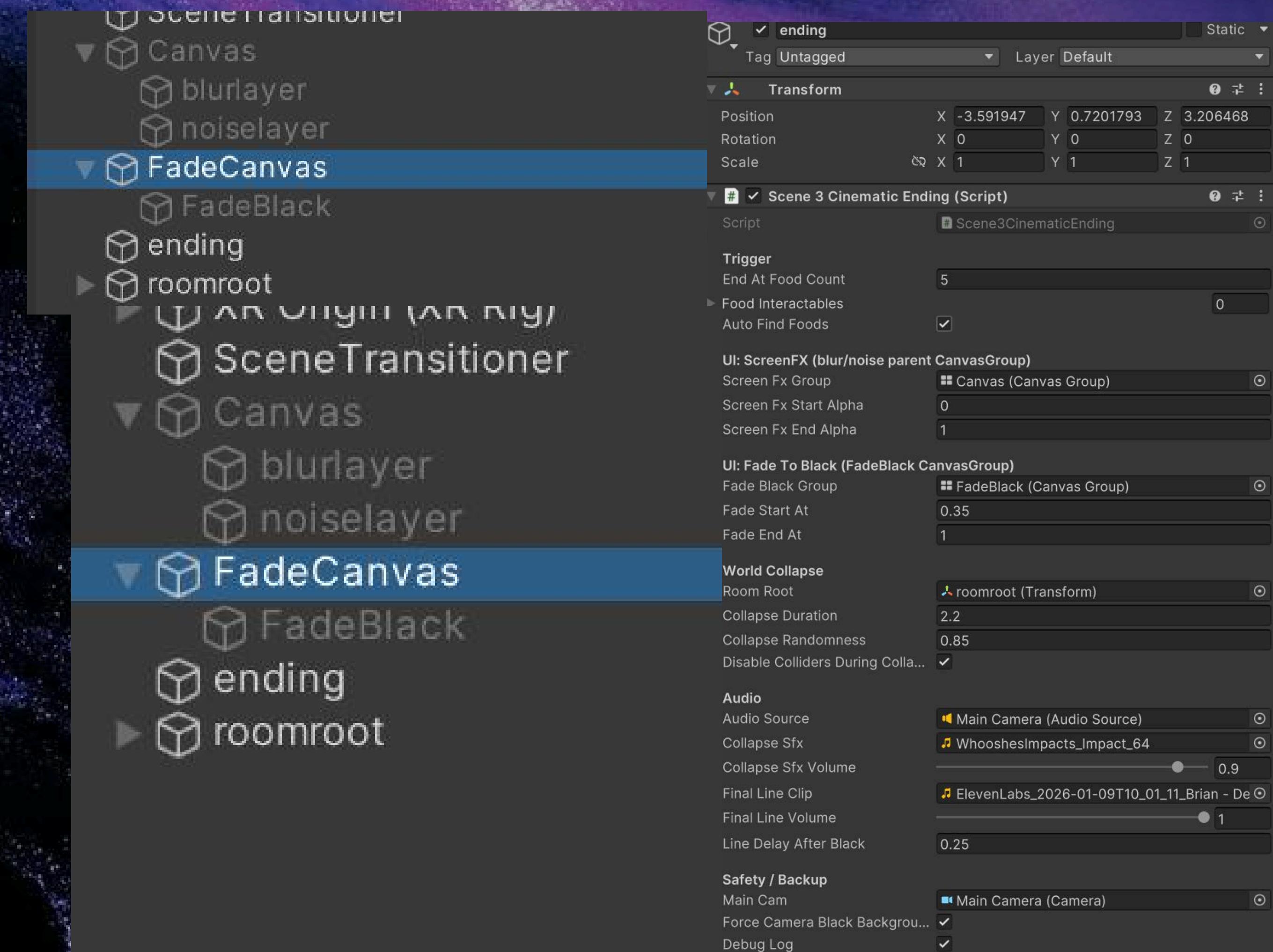
Design process

scene3



Clean up the hierarchy list so that all objects can be eliminated at the end.

Modify the script. Collect food, count to five, then trigger the disappearance of everything.

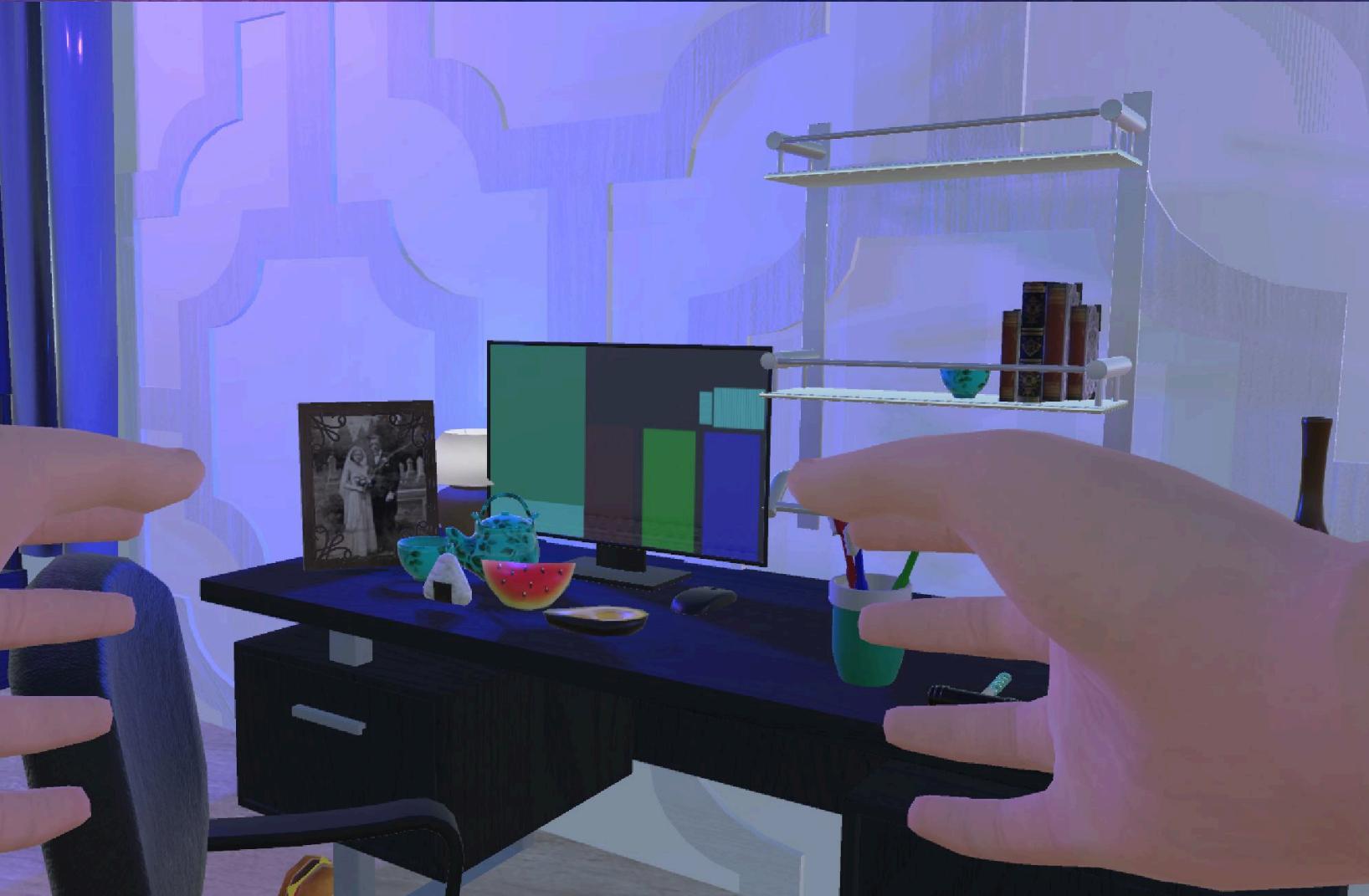


Create a black canvas, build the final effect of falling into nothingness, and add sound effects.

Game scene



Touching furniture triggers a vanishing effect with negative feedback, accompanied by visual blurring.



Touching household items causes the image to distort and flicker, adding negative feedback.



Food triggers a reward mechanism, activates dialogue, and keeps count.



When the count of food items exceeds five, proceed to scenario two.

Scene 2



All guidance is designed to enable players to touch the enormous croissant.

Upon touching the croissant, one enters the final scene.



You smugly assume
that repeated rewards
will secure control?

Of course not.
The sense of control derived
from food is not the way out
of life.

The final scene
plunged into
darkness.









Evaluation Plans

Evaluation goals

- 1. Bias recognition:** Players can recognize that descriptions that attribute anorexia to beauty, a desire to be thin, or perfectionism are biased.
- 2. Attribution shift:** Players' attributions for eating disorders have shifted from "single physical cause" to "other cause" (sense of control, emotional regulation, environmental stress, relationship system, etc.).
- 3. Understanding the mechanism:** Players can connect their experience with the mechanics: "Clarity only during swallowing" is the condition for the reward, and "Falling into nothingness after repeated rewards" is the collapse of the sense of control and a critique of prejudice.
- 4. Ethical experience:** The experience is intense but not at the expense of novelty or stimulation: Players are not guided to imitate specific symptom behaviors.

Hypotheses

1. After experiencing the game, players will use fewer moralistic terms to explain anorexia.
2. After experiencing the game, players can list more possible reasons beyond physical appearance.
3. Players can accurately explain the meaning of the "nothingness" trigger in Scene 3, rather than describing it as a "game punishment."

Texting

I tested the game with my classmates and family and friends. They were all able to complete the game, but didn't understand its deeper meaning. They found it a bit abstract.

Development

MAYBE :Add an optional "Reflection Button" .

Problem: Players experience strong emotions afterward, but the reflection may not be impactful.

Solution: A very simple interactive point appears in the void at the end.

Clicking it will only display 2-3 questions:

"What did you try to control?"

"What did the room refuse to give you?"

Reference

Duarte, T.A., 2020. Janet Treasure, Tiago Antunes Duarte, Ulrike Schmidt. *Lancet*, 395, pp.899-911.

Polivy, J. and Herman, C.P., 2002. Causes of eating disorders. *Annual review of psychology*, 53(1), pp.187-213.

Schmidt, U., Adan, R., Böhm, I., Campbell, I.C., Dingemans, A., Ehrlich, S., Elzakkers, I., Favaro, A., Giel, K., Harrison, A. and Himmerich, H., 2016. Eating disorders: the big issue. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 3(4), pp.313-315.

Williamson, D.A., Muller, S.L., Reas, D.L. and Thaw, J.M., 1999. Cognitive bias in eating disorders: Implications for theory and treatment. *Behavior modification*, 23(4), pp.556-577.