Process & Decision Documentation

GBDA 302 – Side Quest (Week 5)

Project / Assignment Decisions (Individual Work)

For this side quest, I chose to focus on a reflective, camera-led experience rather than a traditional platformer interaction. The prompt emphasized creating a meditative camera experience that scrolls through a world larger than the screen, so I intentionally removed most player control and shifted the focus toward pacing, atmosphere, and visual discovery.

Instead of designing challenges or obstacles, I structured the project around slow camera movement and hidden constellation-like symbols that reveal themselves as the camera passes nearby. This approach allowed the experience to feel intentional and contemplative rather than skill-based. The goal was to make motion itself the primary mechanic.

Role-Based Process Evidence (Individual)

Entry Header
Name: Elizabeth Ciceu
Role(s): Designer & Developer
Primary responsibility for this work: Designing the visual concept, implementing the camera-scrolling system, and developing the constellation-based reveal interaction.

Goal of Work Session

The goal of this work session was to transform a side-scrolling structure into a meditative experience driven by camera movement. I wanted to experiment with how pacing, negative space, and gradual visual reveals could create emotion without relying on complex mechanics or direct player control.

Tools, Resources, or Inputs Used

- Visual Studio Code
- p5.js
- Lecture slides and in-class examples
- GitHub (repository and GitHub Pages)
- ChatGPT for debugging support, structural refinement, and visual ideation

You can paste this under:

> **Appendix: GenAI Interaction Transcript**
> GBDA 302 – Side Quest Week 5
> Assignment: Side Quest Week 5
> Nature of Work: Individual
> Tool Referenced: GitHub Copilot, ChatGPT

Appendix: GenAI Interaction Transcript

GBDA 302 – Side Quest Week 5 (Camera Experience)
Assignment: Side Quest Week 5
Nature of Work: Individual
Tool Referenced: GitHub Copilot, ChatGPT

Purpose of Appendix

This appendix documents how generative AI was used as a support tool during the development of the Week 5 Side Quest. The interaction focuses on refining a camera-led meditative experience, debugging structural issues, and enhancing the visual design of the discovery mechanic. GenAI was used for troubleshooting, iteration, and idea exploration, not for generating a complete project without review.

Transcript Summary (Chronological, Edited for Clarity)

Student:

I want to build off this example. Which approach is better for making it meditative instead of a platformer?

Tool Response:

Explained the difference between player-led and camera-led interaction. Recommended a camera-led experience (Option C) as it aligns more directly with the prompt's emphasis on pacing and motion.

Student:

Okay, let's do Option C.

Tool Response:

Provided a full draft of a camera-scrolling structure that removed platformer mechanics and shifted focus to auto-scrolling and atmospheric pacing.

Student:

Let’s add the bonus idea where the camera discovers hidden objects.

Tool Response:

Suggested implementing auto-discovery based on camera center proximity rather than click-based interaction. Provided logic for symbol data, detection radius, and reveal messaging.

Student:

Put it all together in the complete code.

Tool Response:

Generated a full sketch combining camera movement and symbol discovery. This version initially relied on class-based structure and JSON loading.

Student:

It’s not working — I’m getting a blank screen.

Tool Response:

Diagnosed that the issue was related to file dependencies and JSON loading (`levels.json`). Suggested restructuring and simplifying the project to remove preload and external file dependencies.

Student:

Give me the exact sketch code and index.html.

Tool Response:

Provided a simplified p5-only version of the sketch that eliminated preload and class dependencies to ensure the program would run without hanging on “Loading…”.

Student:

How do you even play this game? What are the controls?

Tool Response:

Clarified that the experience is camera-led and observational rather than player-controlled. Suggested adding a start screen with instructions to improve clarity.

Student:

Can we make the things the camera reveals more graphically interesting?

Tool Response:

Proposed enhancing the reveal mechanic visually by adding glow effects, ripple animations, particles, and eventually suggested a constellation-based reveal for a more cohesive aesthetic.

Student:

Maybe constellations?

Tool Response:

Generated constellation-style reveal logic using star offsets, connecting lines, subtle glow halos, and sparkle animations to make discoveries feel atmospheric and intentional.

Human Decision Points

- I chose to shift from a class-based JSON architecture to a simplified direct p5 implementation after debugging persistent loading errors.
- I decided to remove player movement entirely to better align with the prompt's emphasis on camera motion.
- I selected the constellation aesthetic over particle bursts because it felt calmer and more conceptually aligned with the meditative theme.
- I adjusted the animation timing and glow intensity manually to prevent the reveal from feeling chaotic or overly animated.

Integrity & Verification Note

All AI-generated code was reviewed, tested, and modified manually. I ran the sketch repeatedly in the browser to confirm that:

- The camera scrolled smoothly across a world larger than the screen.
- Constellations triggered only when within the defined proximity.
- The start screen functioned correctly.
- No preload or file dependency errors occurred.

The final implementation reflects iterative refinement rather than direct copy-paste adoption.

Scope of GenAI Use

GenAI was used as a development support tool for:

- Debugging structural issues
- Refining conceptual direction
- Suggesting visual enhancements
- Improving documentation clarity

The final concept, aesthetic direction (constellations), pacing decisions, and code adjustments were determined and implemented by the student.

Limitations or Misfires

Early iterations relied on JSON and class dependencies, which caused loading issues. These structural complexities were intentionally removed to simplify the architecture and ensure reliability. Some early animation suggestions were visually too intense and were reduced to maintain the meditative tone.

Summary of Process (Human + Tool)

The project began as a class-based side-scrolling structure but evolved into a simplified camera-led visual experience. Through debugging and iteration, the architecture was streamlined, and the discovery mechanic was enhanced visually using a constellation theme. GenAI assisted with troubleshooting and experimentation, but the conceptual direction and final execution were shaped through manual refinement and repeated testing.