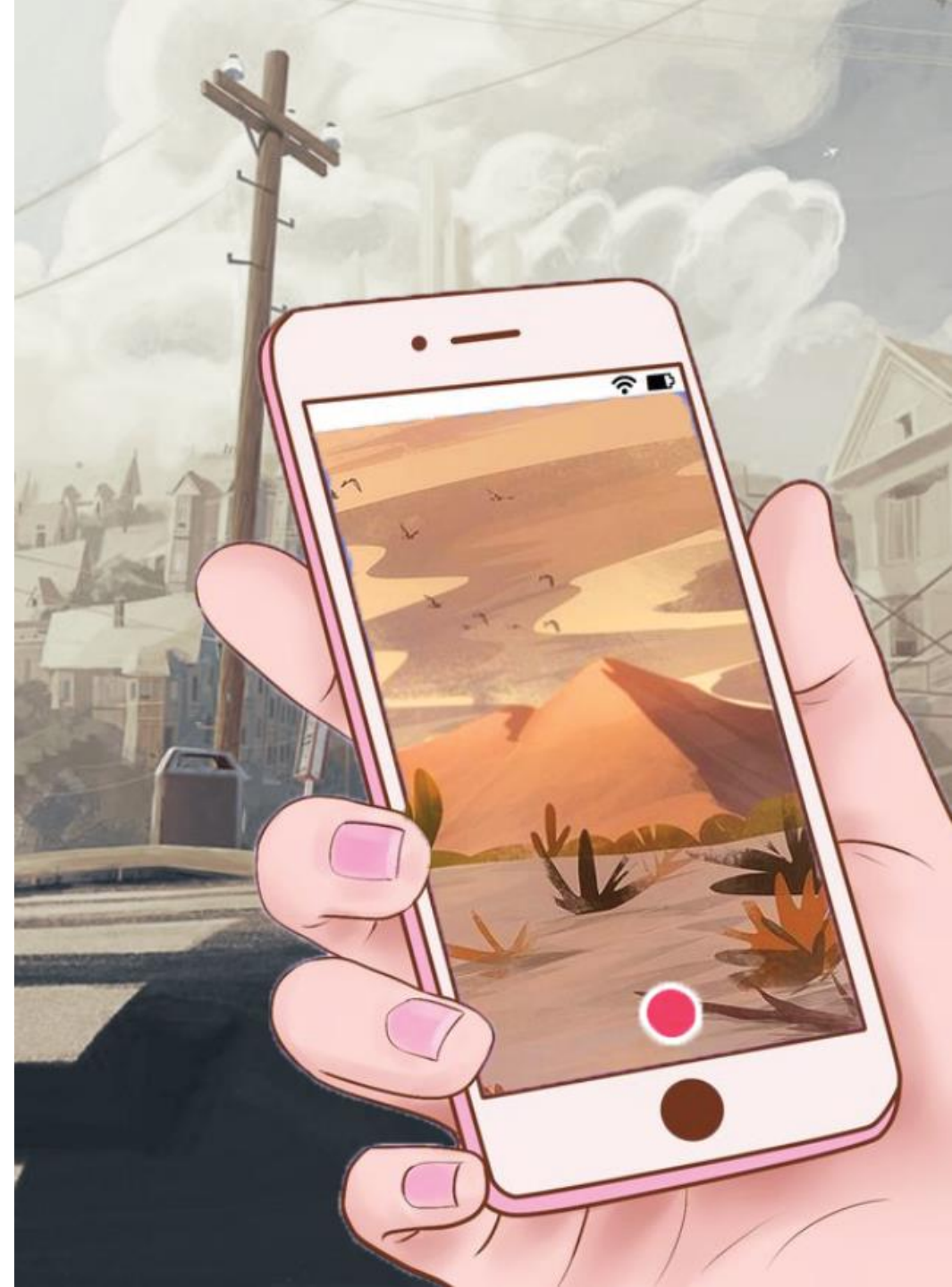# The Desert Portal

• What if you looked through your phone camera and saw an alternate dimension on the other side?

• The Desert Portal is an augmented reality experience that transforms the user's phone into a window through which they can see a desert reflection of our own world - without buildings, trees, or any signs of life - but the contours of its dunes and mountains follow the landscape of the earth. Lakes, rivers and oceans all exist where they do in our reality. The sound of wind blowing over sand comes through the screen, and the endless desert's sun, moon, and weather patterns mirror ours.

• The Desert Portal reframes the smart phone experience as a calm, meditative one rather than a fast-paced, goal oriented one.

Game Idea

Hook + Genre

The atmosphere and environments of **walking simulators** and **experimental games**, combined with **augmented reality** + **geolocation** + **weather technology** to encourage exploring one's own environment and seeing it in a different way.

Platforms

Mobile, iPad

Mechanics / Gameplay

Player Goal

- Currently no goal. Possible goals:
- discovering other players?
- Exploring and learning about the world?
- Meeting NPCs?
- Uncovering a character-based narrative?
- Building shelters?

Moment to moment gameplay

- Opening the app, the player's view is obscured by a sandstorm. Once the phone has established geolocation and used AR to pinpoint the phone's location in space, the sandstorm lifts to reveal the desert landscape.

- **Walking in the real world** to move through the virtual one. Looking through the phone, **taking photos and videos** like it's a camera app.
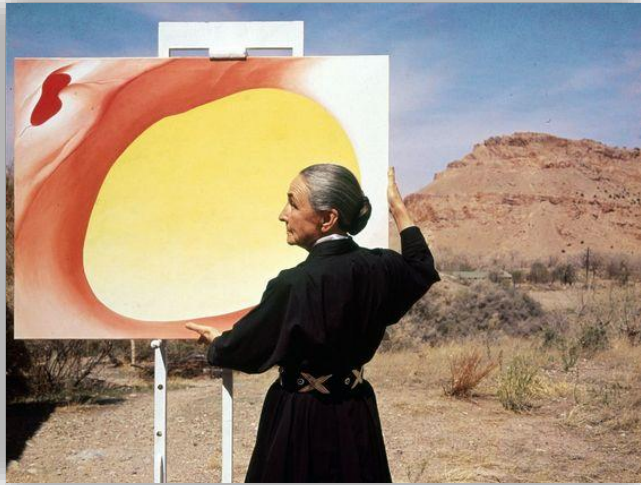
Story

The Desert Portal creates a minimal narrative out of questions. What did you come to the desert searching for? Were you escaping to a new place? Were you hoping to learn something about yourself?

Thematically, it explores isolation, discovery, and the role of the natural world in our identities and mental health. While it is hard to process feelings of entrapment or isolation in one's environment, the desert is an inherently isolated place where feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction are acceptable.
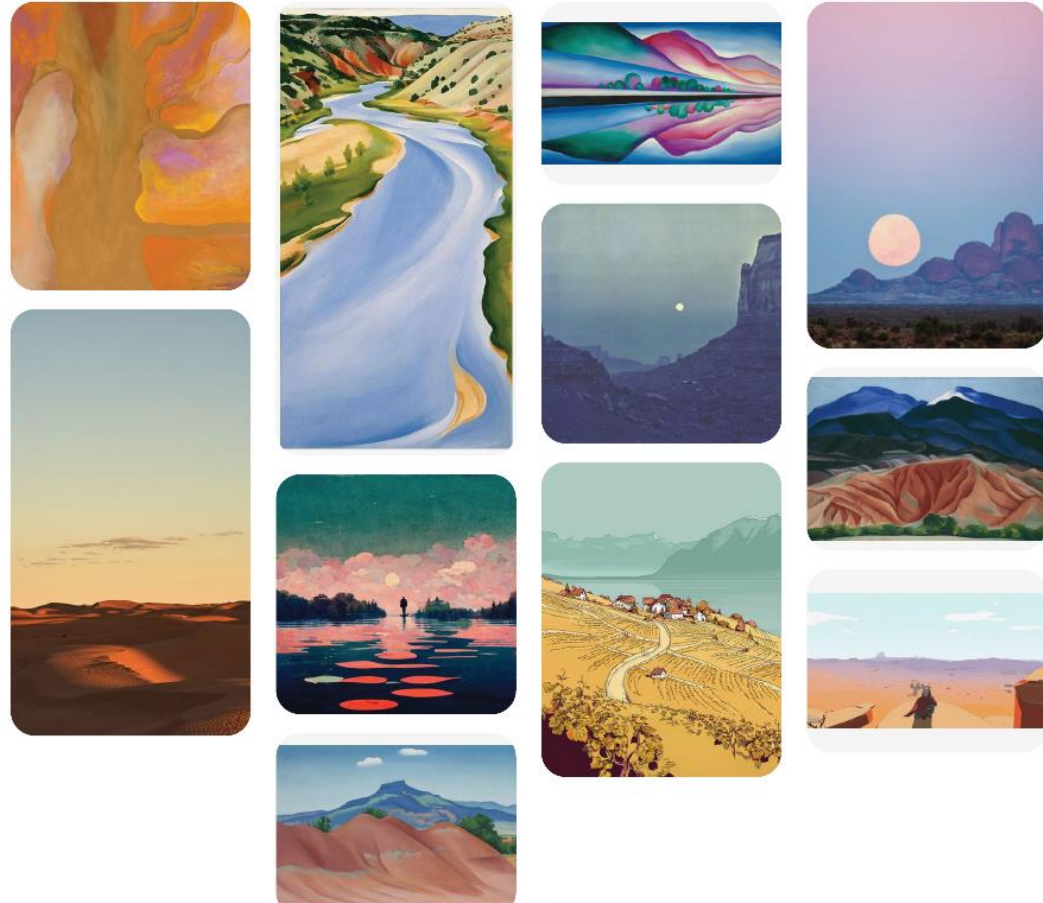
Rather than providing answers or filling any need in a user's life, the desert (as a reflection of reality) should inspire people to seek out the natural beauty they find within the app in real life. Different environments are necessary to grow as a person. Hopefully, any story takes place in the IRL experiences had because of the portal.

Mood Board / Visual Inspirations

The landscapes of Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe is a painter known in part for her iconic depictions of the New Mexico landscape. Her style transforms the landscapes completely, into body-esque shapes.

References

For its soundtrack created by a professional band, diversifying the game development process and putting more emphasis on the various artistic components of games.

For gameplay / experience

For mobile centered controls and UI

For environment design

For use of AR and other tech

Conclusion

- The Desert Portal **experiments with AR** for storytelling and environment creation. It explores the possibilities of interactive media with environments and mechanics that are **not explicitly game-like**.

- If this project succeeds, I want to continue developing for mobile, because mobile is most **accessible to all types of people**. I also want to continue to experiment with AR and other non-conventional experiences.

- As someone who was inspired by artistic video games as a kid, I want this project to inspire children to see the potential of art and technology. I want this app to be accessible for my friends and family who are not proficient with technology or video games.

Thank You