

Playtest 4 - Asynchronous

Goals

Feedback - Transitions between tense, object interaction,
Mechanic twists? Or full repeat of understanding what people get stuck on with our base mechanic
Level design purposeful changes

Questions

Thoughts on visual assets

Did the player feel comfortable in the environment enough to interact, or was it a feeling of being "unable to continue politely"

Mechanics - Understandable to the player, how quick to understand

UI/Instructions - Understand what they're asking, helpful?,

Level Design - Comfortableness, understanding the setting of city/low income, blend of post-processing not too jarring from the level,

Personal wow factors, player interest/draw, player needs based on what they have

Does the player understand the mechanics with the given feedback and UI?

What jumps out most to the player

What wows the player

What can we do to improve the bare minimum items

Set up

Finalize Level format and mechanic inclusions - Web Build made by Wednesday EOD

Web Build link:

Survey Link: https://rit.az1.qualtrics.com/survey-builder/SV_1G2WTvrmZyvESLI/edit

In the lab: Same setup as last time (Alfie/Nuha/Abby's computers), with someone watching the station and making notes of what the players say/do that they might not catch

Notes

Abby Notes:

Playtest 1: Erika: burning effect was a "wow" effect. E prompt was missed, had to be helped.

Should stay on screen longer or only go away once button pressed? (If it doesn't already).

Second station was a doozy. Timing is fast on photo switching. E was remembered! Vignette

effect was not noticed. Likes exploring (maybe people will like strong worldbuilding as well as the mechanic).

Playtest 2: Shubham: burn effect is wow. Quick to figure it out. Stair photo was wonky to find. Lots of good notes in survey. Didn't even notice there was a vignette effect.

Playtest 3: Sean Boyle: Missed the WASD prompt but saw the mouse one? Tooltips would be helpful with context (when hovering over correct item, etcetera). Forgot the E effect. Wondered about if it would be controller input later on. Would like to see narrative explanation for why they were in this situation. Movement was satisfying.

Playtest 4: Lyndsay Herkimer: NOT a gamer, but tried her best. Liked the dissolve effect. Needed a lot of help. Another lesson in who do we want playing this game?

Playtest 5: Chris: another Ben/gorilla on the bars shaking fiercely. Didn't even see the E prompt, but remembered from last test. Tested angles of the photo matching, which proved it's working correctly. Did the good ol' "hold photo and strafe" technique. Vignette is nice, BUT it disappears A LOT even if you are very very close to the right position. Good observation. Really trying to break my box colliders, but I've got them this time. Almost no point to the jumping. Feels unsatisfying. Needs more intentional verticality? Or just allow them to jump on the tables and hurt me mentally.

Playtest 6: 601 Student: rabid button mashing. Switched the photo and doesn't know how to switch it back. Given instruction. Second station is finicky. Vignette effect does seem to need more polish, but it helped once they were in the right spot. Knew what was going on mainly because of watching the pitches, so pitches are good!

Gav Notes:

Playtest 1: Kyle Weekley

- Tutorial messages just pop up for a second and go away. Almost missed them.
- Very caught off guard / confused that when the switch is held it toggles back and forth from past and present.
- The photo switch between past and present not as evident / certain as we'd like, but kyle did say "okay, this is how it was like before"
 - Forgot which was which because the chess board wasn't that different
 - "I haven't even really processed the change in the world yet, and I was still holding it because it's my first time doing this, I didn't even know to put it down yet. And before I knew anything, I reset it"
- Shocked that you could jump
- Did not have a clear sense of conclusion to go up the stairs
- The last photo specifically felt finicky. Pretty sure he was in the right space, but it's unclear if it's working until it works.

Playtest 2: Aditya Sinha

- "Beautiful"
- Restarted the game because of pressing 'escape'.
- "Oochh, that's beautiful" @ the photo switching visuals.
 - "Easy to understand: you have a picture, you move towards the interaction, you press the button, boom."
 - Would like some range to be able to tell what the activation is.
 - I had him walk away and observe the brightening up.
 - The photo needs to stop glowing as strongly, because it's still impressive that it's in 'effective' range. Not CLEAR where you EXACTLY need to be. It's still vague.
- "What is this place modeled after? Italy?"
- Omg he can jump!!
- It's very confusing where the specific line up position is, so he's just holding the photo up and relying on the glow / vignette.
- "If I look away it still glows."
- The angle of the sun illuminating the photo is misleading.
- It's not clear that the vignette effect works with side to side.
- "What'd you finally do?"
 - "Nothing, I just adjusted the angle. It's so precise!"
- Would hold up the thing for longer and it would accidentally revert.
- Tended to line it up and take his hands off the keyboard, watching the vignette effect close in.
- Eventually registered that vignette functioned side to side.
- "It's instinct" to want to match up the small photo with what's seen on the screen.
- "I didn't think you'd need to be so precise with it, but clearly that's my mistake! It's easy to understand. Was just surprised."

Playtest 3: Corinne F.

- Has played the game before, noted the tooltip change.
- Appreciated the inaccessible environment for polish.
- Struggled with noticing the differences with the table photo.
 - Didn't notice the picture being put on the table.
 - Got the stairs immediately though.
- Loves the concept, compelling & unique mechanic. Good narrative → fantastic game. The mechanic is finicky. Confused by the pictures that looked the same.

Playtest 4: Nick E.

- "We're in a town!"
 - Really liked the cityscape.
- "Do I have a flashlight, or am I just glowing?"
 - I think the glow of the photo should wear off a lot faster.

- “That’s a cool effect! But if I hold it, it keeps going... I don’t really like it. What if I had a bad reaction time, and it just keeps going and I miss it? I think there should be a grace period before it starts cycling.”
- “The table was a bit more sensitive. Plus, most people wouldn’t notice an object put on the table.”
- “I think the vignette and the glow effects fit so well that I didn’t actively register them, they just worked and didn’t stand out to my brain.”
 - It might have not actively helped, but it looked cool and as a part of it.

Playtest 5: Steven Yi

- The lighting is kind of weird. Makes it look like it’s sunset vs. it’s golden.
 - Austin says no ambient occlusion.
- The first puzzle was not fully ‘lived out’, he dropped it quickly.
- “Square peg, round hole.”
- The table was finicky.
- Didn’t notice the photo on the table at first.
- Returned to the starting area when acquiring the third photo.
- Went back to repair the stairs.

Playtest 6: Sean Foley

- Is a fan of the lighting.
- Liked the effect.
- Very gentle presses when approaching the table.
- Let the change happen multiple times, probably trying to observe the differences.
 - The photo switch bug also happened here.
- The progression of the mechanic is cool, likes to see that you can interact with the changes in the world (stairs, gate).
- *Feels dream-like. Lighting, space you’re in, you can see out into this void, it feels dreamy.*
- Mechanics are really cool and interesting.

Playtest 7:

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Playtest 8:

Wren Notes:

Playtest 1, Weez:

“Feels like sunset!” Sees photo, knows premise of game so looks for gate, Figured out controls before playing. “OH!” Tutorial for rmb lasted long time. Has good spatial knowledge, loves the feedback and likes that the photo matches the scene

(which is an accident)

Took a bit to notice the photo on the table, might need more guidance to understanding the linearity of the pathing. Kick ball?

Needed assistance with distancing for the objects, needed direction on info that she picked up a photo. Relies on spatial orientation but staircase is very close up for that. Got stopped at the top of the stairs

Playtest 2, Rye:

Tries to escape immediately, likes the swapping and how much more accurate the line up is, explores and questions assets, wants more interaction everywhere, mentions distance from image pickup, confused by image but figured out where immediately. Loves the glow even if it's just the lighting reflecting on the photos

Playtest 3, Ben:

Bonks around trying to clip, movement feel times and adjust monitor, doesn't like jump cooldown/sometimes can't jump, tries to climb the building,

Takes things LITERALLY :eyes: held too long lmao. Need a delay on swapping to match the dissolve. Likes the dissolve effect, more feedback on swapping

Got the present/past photos confused. Finished game

Bug testing with colliders, jumping, etc, has found the sprint button. Peaked into walls for "future stuff oooo" happy things held up.

Playtest 4, Joseph:

Loves the lighting and color, understands the surreal inspirations.

Noticed the glowing effect as part of the experience, Understood that he picked up a photo from the table pretty quickly, very good spatial knowledge

"It's like I Spy but 3D!"

Didn't see many changes with the last two, slightly confusing

Likes liminal space stuff, Sometimes feels like Erika is watching him

Lighting of the game battles the glow effect on the photos

Comparison: Less frustrating than the previous prototype

Playtest 5, Paulette:

Learning PC controls, needed assistance due to the lack of instructions, Got the gate once she figured out what to do, focused more on her objective and not the world (is used to 2d games though so it makes sense) had me demonstrate the puzzles due to her lack of knowledge with the controls

Really liked the colors/lighting, wants more text due to her narrative background

Playtest 6, Mason:

Jumps right in, got the gate immediately, very silent on things but understands the assignment overall. Little stuck on the photo pickup but that was due to distance. Loves the onboarding

more now. Feels the effect of the dissolve was too long, wanted to wait for it to finish but the reality changed when that happened.

Playtest 7, Austin:

Wants the soccer ball to move

Why is the light from the photos

Wants to swing on swing and interact with the world more

"This lineup is weird"

Got blocked by the survey when trying to jump to death

Now trying to break whatever he can, figured out how to skip the survey

He clipped through the world

David Notes:

Survey:

"What games do you play?" - consider adding "often" to the end.

Consider adding "When did you last play?" as a question after answering yes to if they've played before.

Bugs:

All photo's old/new materials are reversed.

We need to get the state to swap once per RMB press instead of looping while held.

Spam jumping is janky.

Playtest 1: Jason

Speedran the demo. Didn't seem to actually notice the dissolve/burn effect on the photos after a swap. Excited about the sprint button. Got confused for a second when "Press E" came up when he was right next to the newspapers on the bike, so he thought he was picking something up.

Playtest 2: Nick Buonarota (blind)

Figured out the gate after about 10 seconds. Got confused with the "E" prompt at the bike again. Went left after the gate. Less-than-stellar alignment of the table photo led to confusion when it didn't work the first time - left table to explore the area and went back to the bike to press E. Tried to enter the doorways, still stuck at the table after more than a minute. - **test out several different effects on the photos simultaneously for comparisons (AB testing for empirical data to back decisions)**. Timing of the vignette and burning is weird. Also need to get rid of toggling photo states when RMB is held. Another way to show what state the photo is in when it is held and transitioning to tell the player what's happening - **more signifiers on the swap interaction**. Survey question 1 may want to include "when did you last play."

Playtest 3: Robley Evans (familiar, but first playtest)

Figured out the gate quickly enough. Did not get caught up on the bike and E. Ran into double-swap on the table and got a bit stuck. Had to point out that the table's state changed twice in the instance.

Playtest 4: Triton (familiar, but first playtest)

Ran into the double swap a couple of times. Noticed the glow on the photo. Said the "When presented with someone's personal items..." question felt odd.

Playtest 5: David Simkins (familiar, but first playtest)

First time playing through it. Felt the positioning and angling was too picky. Prompts don't stick around long enough. Noticed the photos didn't quite line up properly. We should make the glow effect more noticeable. Mild concern that having a jump that hardly does something might be misleading. Consider a visual effect on top of things that change in the scene after a swap to indicate what things were added. Any kind of movement that would draw attention to a new object. In the survey regarding size of props, they said that as long as scale is consistent, things will look right.

Playtest 6: Jackson (blind)

Recognized the reversed first photo bug. "Press LMB isn't activating over photos, so we'll have to put that there. Bugs got in the way of the experience. Controls were not terribly apparent (LMB). Effect on the photos was good.

Observations

Players had consistency with problems regarding instructions disappearing quickly before they understood and scenes changing before reactions could catch up (so lots of timing issues on our part)

A lack of guidance meant players would complete a puzzle and then be unaware of what they should be doing with themselves, and a lack of display for what's "changed" (if anything actually stopped on the correct scene) meant that players wouldn't understand their next steps.

Precision and impatience meant that not everyone observed the feedback effects, because they were used to the speed of the change over the knowledge of the dissolve/vignette

Lighting pulled away from the glow effect that we wanted to test out, and the photos being objects and not UI meant the lighting interfered directly.

Mixed responses on movement and player interaction. A decent number of people want to engage with the environment more, and others want to not have the red herring jump in the game if they don't need to be platforming.

Results from Survey

Mechanics: Understandable, people don't like jump this go around,

UI: Want to go back to them, too quick to properly understand, change the range to be properly around the desired items/selection, need more explanation on what controls do, visuals perhaps on multiple photos, images and/or different colors for matching the overall vibes of the rest of the game, accessible recall of instructions, RMB/LMB is confusing

Visuals: People didn't notice the glow effect (either with the lighting or weren't paying attention to it, lots of people didn't find the vignette helpful/didn't use it to direct themselves, dissolve effect was loved but too slow compared to the transition behind it, inconsistency with prop sizing (maybe need a standard human prop for scale?))

Extra: Wows for the dissolve effect, Jumping, the environment, the mechanic itself

People were drawn to the mechanic and the environment (the soccer ball too)

Missing: More story, an album, forgiveness on the angles/distance, audio

Other thoughts: mismatch of photos to the background was jarring, story, temporal anti-aliasing, want the photos to not automatically transition if you hold it up long enough, more objects in the world, don't like jumping, audio, interaction in environment beyond mechanic,

Combined:

Overall, people really liked what they saw. Feedback on the vfx feedback was very positive, and the mechanic is still very intriguing to a lot of people. The environment + colors/lighting were also positively commented on both in person and on the survey, which means our aesthetics are developing well and has cohesion with the mechanics.

Our other updates from the previous playtest fell flatly: Jumping feels wrong because it's not a platformer, the hot-n-cold effects weren't noticed either due to wonky positioning or the lighting interfering with their impact, the UI disappears before the player can fully understand what they need to do with what they're told about

New things: Players were given a slightly more filled space (swing, soccer ball, bike) and so they lost any sense of linearity that we had in the previous prototype. Without any visual direction, and with objects only slightly being changed, many people reported getting lost/stumped on what to do and some required verbal guidance in order to progress; With the increase in objects, they want more interactions beyond just spatial puzzling

Old things: Precise locations for the angles/lack of forgiveness on the distance/etc was frustrating still, as people were "so sure" they matched the photos up but were slightly off the distance of angle or both;

People want to have reminders of the controls and/or ability to pull them back up. Maybe a menu on a pause screen?