10/14 - In Class with Faculty and classmates
10/15 - Main lobby/GOL2000 with Brick City visitors

Goals for the playtest:

Have a digital prototype of main mechanics : Our main goal for the playtests is to observe and report on how players interact with the past photo/present environment puzzle system in order to progress through the given "world".
Gauge onboarding needs + necessary UI information : We'll also be testing a type of UI for onboarding the player into the controls/continued reinforcement of the mechanic given to them
Run through bits of narrative?

Questions we'll be figuring out:

Differences in questions between internal and external? Do we want to ask regular gamers different questions from our Advanced Gamers?

Mechanic:
How confusing is it when first introduced? *(Survey)*
How interesting is just the mechanic when in practice? *(Survey)*
When thrown into a scenario similar to the tutorial, how intuitive is it to compare the environment to the photographs in search of the next step? *(Observation)*

UI:
How confusing is the UI to understand? *(Survey)*
Does the player get lost at any point and rely on the UI to figure out what's next, or do they self-guide themselves? *(Survey)*
Is an obtrusive UI better for the player, or does it draw the player too far out of the immersion? *(Survey)*

Level Design:
Does the player explore their environment outside of the photographs? *(Observation)*
Do they interact with *any* objects or just ones mentioned as interactable? *(Observation)*
When lost, do they rely on the environment to guide them? *(Survey)*

Set Up/Decisions

Level Decisions:

10/14: General Playtest

Who:

Running the playtest: Henrietta-based members
Playing the prototype: Other capstone teams, faculty that are available, 601 students

Where:

Grad Lab, using Alfie's, Abby's, and nearby computers to put space between playtesters

Set up:

Revamped the build 15 minutes before to baby proof it

10/15: Brick City Homecoming IGM Playtest Event

Who

Running the playtest: Wren, Abby, David
Playtesters: Randos

Where:

The 2nd floor lounge, GOL 2000, and GOL 2035. There will be a seating chart for teams, probably handed out day of

Set up:

Wren's classes finish at 12:10 so they'll be able to go early and get the build pulled up on the computers, and then be joined as people get free of responsibilities

Setup starts at 1pm officially

Notes (Days of)

(Separate sections per person managing a computer)
Please take pictures throughout the experience
Keep an eye out for:
When thrown into a scenario similar to the tutorial, how intuitive is it to compare the environment to the photographs in search of the next step?
Does the player explore their environment outside of the photographs?
Do they try to interact with *any* objects or just ones mentioned as interactable?

Internal:

Abby Notes: *SCREAM*

Playtest 1 ERIKA PART 1: seemed to miss the queue for the right mouse button
Interprets the Right click as reuse keypress, right mouse button symbol might need to be more descriptive <mark>*needed a hint*</mark>

Playtest 2: knowing that they need to line up the photo is not explicitly known. UI element needs to be moved to be exact with the change trigger box. Once figured out that things needed to be lined up, process was faster.

Playtest 3 BEN: certain UI trigger areas make it seem like something else is going to happen (i.e using E on the dumpsters. Again, pictures need to be more accurately taken. Didn't take as long to line up this time. Really loved messing with the switching scenes on the trigger areas. Tried to clip through the barriers. Liked to break things. Thought the trigger for E key meant picking up photos from the objects in the scene. Maybe shrink that trigger box? I nEvEr GoT lOsT. Make the interaction trigger for the door available ONLY if they have the key for it. Note on Ben: just loves breaking shit

Playtest 4: Again confused on lining up the photos. Should probably give more of an indicator for that. Needs a lot of guidance on where to be for the photo to change the scene. Might need a larger trigger box. <mark>*HINTED*</mark> for positioning of gate photo. Took A WHILE for the first trigger scene switch. Same issue with Ben's notes. Interaction button for the door opening should only be present when players actually have the key.

Playtest 5: talkative which is good. Discussed their process. Wanted so badly to jump. SO badly. THE MESH COLLIDERS. Found the photo scene switch after screwing around with the barriers by accident, I'm crying. "Easier if I was a photography major." Tree placement was useful for table scene. Another instance of "don't have the door interact trigger visible until you have a key." Would have liked to have been "confused" by the puzzles (i.e. liked it now, but wants something more challenging in future). Thought menu indicator was a space bar. Old photo

quality was appreciated. Nothing conflicted with aesthetics. Liked the concept, wants to see more

Playtest 6 Chris L. Part 2: less linear, how do things tie together, boring walking around (trapped in one environment), liked interacting with the broken barriers, a living environment. Essentially wants physics interaction with items. INTERACTABILITY. Still had fun.

Playtest 7: figured out how to use photos pretty smoothly. Still had trouble lining photos up properly, but not nearly as much as others. Confused on lining up photos while NOT head on with the object. *Hinted* could be from different angles for switching pictures. Missed key on table. *Hinted* still had something to do with table puzzle, then proceeded to collect key.

Wren Notes:

Playtest 1:
Explores the scene quickly making sure nothing is left behind?
Doesn't recognize spatial aspect of it, goes head on with all photos
Need ui to demonstrate locked door
Photos go through walls haha
Gets stuck because went to door first and doesn't have key
We have a sprint?

Playtest 2 Erika Part 2:
Pictures changing is a little confusing
Went to door first, got confused with lack of UI
Tree might need to be more obvious in background of table, or more items to denote where the photo was taken
Took some time to get the image lined up for the trigger box

Playtest 3:
Explores around, enjoys cycling through the photos, got the mechanic quickly
Speedrunning but going through all the steps
Spatial patterns get them initially but solves the puzzle soon after

Playtest 4:
Somehow dodges the E trigger box completely
Playing with controls taught him the right mouse button
Threw our barrier across the screen???
Is very lost due to a lack of the E button, and hasn't returned to the middle of the square
Clings to the walls, might follow the ideology that Weez talked about with the sun
Need the UI to show up longer than the trigger boxes, like when they activate it or something
Hinted the instructions
Definitely had the WOah reaction when switching the scene
Spatial Puzzle is necessary for this and it's difficult to see tree

Playtest 5:
ERIC
Missed the E cue so now confused/lost
Broke the game by throwing the barrier and got on top
Hinted about E control
Very speedy once he figured it out with the control
Hates my survey so angery

Playtest 6:
Tricked the UI to stay up longer
Figured it out when the gate image came back up
Skipped to door before table, need more linear pathing? :)
Didn't understand the first puzzle swap, so retraced steps and figured it out
Spatial puzzles need more points of reference
Retraced steps again
Might need more onboarding for figuring out the background, the gate was too head on
SUDDENLY TABLE
Seems the strats is flash the photo quickly until it changes
"That was the dark souls of playtests"

Playtest 7:
Got all of the controls quickly, explored the entire area after triggering the gate
Tried to climb through the doorframe
Stumbled on the table, flashing the image while walking is the strat
Likes triggering the door and/or thinks the doorless version is the correct one
Missed the key on the table
This kid is very lost, trying to knock everything down
I'm dying scoob
GOt stuck in the tires
Trying the door again
Took forever even after the door was open

Playtest 8:
Very quickly understood controls
Figured out Gate spatial stuff right away
Tentative with walking around
Skipped to door first
Played with the table photo and then caught the tree in the background

Controls weren't obvious enough so he thought it was just a exploration
Big UI needs:
Reactive stuff

Instructions
A hand for immersion

Playtest 9:
Mechanics onboarding is quick, UI lasted long enough
Didn't recognize E cycles through the images, maybe make more reactive stuff for that
Big WOW moment with triggering the gate change
Figured out spatial aspect quickly, noticed key quickly too
Very fast with all of it

Playtest 10:
Complains that he's not taking pictures
Wants a little hop
Going fast because he understands mechanics
Speedrunning now
Gets stumped on first survey question "What are your initial thoughts"
Doesn't like the sass

Devs: Use UI so it doesn't clip through the world

Playtest 11:
Quickly got through the gate, figured out E is swap pictures
Angling the wrong way for the door,
Wants Hot n cold help for picture telling cues
Didn't get the table set up before the door, no cues confuses
Recognizes the broken table while looking around
Lining up as best as they can
Exclaims when solving the puzzles

Playtest 12:

David Notes:

Playtest 1:
- Player with no prior knowledge of the game, struggled a lot before the gate
- Figured out controls pretty quickly
- Spent >30 seconds trying to figure out where to go
- Bashed against closed gate a lot
- We need to tell people to line up the photo with where it was taken from
- Fixated on dumpsters, still not connecting the photo to the gate
- Made it through the gate after more than 2 minutes
- Door needs feedback to tell the player that it's locked
- Fixated on the door and ignored the table for some time

- Key wasn't noticeable from the photo, took a while to figure out something was on the table

Playtest 2: Patrick
- Watched our pitch, so he had some experience
- Learned the controls quickly and zoomed through the gate in under 30 seconds
- Pro gamer - strafed a ton to find the right angle and position for stations

Playtest 3:
- Struggled for >1 minute at the gate
- Ignored the right-mouse-button UI element for some time
- Strugged past the gate, didn't seem to have a grasp at how he solved the gate
- Figured out that position and angle matter after about a minute

Playtest 4: Emily
- Jumped right in and got through the gate quickly
- Happy at the photo's swapped contents
- Went to the door before the table, learned that angle matters there
- Called out having an inventory before getting the key
- Confused at the purpose of the photos from a narrative perspective

Playtest 5:
- Missed "E" UI element
- Confused at the ability to move the jersey barriers
- Swapped to arrow keys for movement for unknown reasons
- Needed heavy guidance to proceed
- Mentioned they don't know how exact they need to be when lining up the photo, but then did not attempt to line it up more precisely
- No prior experience - wanted to have the instruction of lining up the photos to be present at the start

Playtest 6:
- Hit gate angle real quick
- Quickly noticed that angle matters
- Enjoyed the mechanic
- Initial confusion, but really liked the gradual release of controls to the player (drip-fed)

Playtest 7:
- Started strong with reading the GUI
- Struggled with finding the right angle at the gate
- Exactly matching the position and angle took time
- Confused at automatic station swapping
  - We should highlight the feedback that the photo has been used in some way
- The puzzle being finding the right sequence of events is interesting
  - Maybe have some photos change multiple stations?
- We should clear up the ambiguity of the mouse symbols

Gav Notes:

Playtest 1: Sten McKenzie
- needs a transition between the pictures

- Approached them door first
    - "Ah, yeah. Good job. Except for one thing. If I move the tires vs looking for a key; I'm gonna try to move the tires. Maybe bricking it up."
- "I love this game: this game is like super cool
- (Matches up the door)
    - "Ah, that's so cool
    - "That's the whole shebang"
- Jiggle the door handle to show you're interacting b it that it's stuck.
- "Oh, this is a hard one. How do you figure out where you're supposed be?"
- Generally Took the route of having the photo up the whole time and moving his position,
- It's hard to find the right angle, but it's part of the mechanic, so it's fine.
- "That's an unfair question." @ if the mechanics were confusing.

Playtest 2: Jesse
- logically put together that he had photos from the last.
- Took the approach of getting super close, and then backing up to match the scale
- "I feel like I'm doing it right, but nothing's happening."
- So
- Start with a simpler application of the mechanic. The only way I knew to do that was prior knowledge. But consider some sort of introduction; super simple, even simpler than the gate.
    - Something simple, like a child's toy. Matching shapes for simplicity's sake.
- Jesse went to the table first.
- Recognized that the tree is a good indicator for position.
- Jesse began the route of backing up and adjusting minute amounts to find the proper position.
- Fun! Cool mechanic!

Playtest 3: Jake Adams
- "That's really satisfying!!"
    - Was laughing a lot
- Reminds him of Firewatch.
- Took a lot of time in the first part, didn't really get the controls

Playtest 4: Chris L.
- He's just trying to figure out how to get over the gate without the photo mechanic, which I don't think he knows exist.
- Took the approach of moving back and forth while holding up the photo, sliding almost until it automatically switched.
- Not clear the door is locked.
- Really like how there are almost no transitions between changing the environment. Liked how it flipped instantaneously. Having a long transition sounds boring.

Playtest 5: Jason K.

- figured it out super quickly
- Aligned photo with tree
- Speed ran it basically
- "Picture didn't really give indication that it'd changed the environment"

Playtest 6: Adi S.
- awful Nickelback reference
- "Ohh, I get it. This game is cool."
- "*snap* it opens like magic."
- Quickly understood the logical narrative
- "Brilliant"
- Reminds him of the time level in Dishonored 2
- "Yesss queen yessss"
- "What part of the world is this? Tennessee? Connecticut? Rhode Island? this has to be rhode island. This has to be USSR."

Playtest 7: Nick E.
- mind game'd the UI, switching right click and left click.
- The positioning is very precise
- If the photo were a little transparent, perhaps it'd be easier for the players to line up the photo. Currently has to "shimmee"
- Likes that the photo stay in the album the whole time.

External

Abby Notes: *SCREAM*

Playtest 1 NON GAMER: non-explicit controls VERY unfriendly to people who don't play games often. Have controls up on screen (little side buttons). Maybe a beginning story to understand the premise.

Playtest 2 AMBASSADOR: Very fast to change the first scene. Understood it quickly. Knows games well. World-record speedrun. Sharp spatial skills. "Very cool"

Playtest 3 CHILD 11: Got controls fast, but didn't know how to use them. Trigger boxes for the changes are difficult. Understood to use the tree as spatial reasoning. Small trigger boxes are finicky.

Playtest 4 NON GAMER: Missing/overlooking UI queues for some buttons. May need more explanation on spatial reasoning/lining things up. Ah-ha moment on gate. Again, low spatial reasoning. Moved on to door photo when confused about the table. Table trigger is really tough. More indicators on how close the pic is would be nice.

Playtest 5: got mechanic fairly quickly. Good spatial reasoning for the tree. Strafing to find the table photo. Strafing for the door. Forgot the key pickup. Went back to table for key naturally after seeing the door was locked.

Wren Notes:

Playtest 1:
Longer Intro to controls due to not being a gamer
Enjoys unity built in stuff
Lots of hints lmao
Very cautious
Struggling to find the match point
Spatial puzzles might be a struggle in general
Lots of hints
Need better/easier onboarding
Was able to solve the 2nd and third puzzles much faster once she realized how the photos play

Reminded her of the "what's the difference" games

Playtest 2:
Enters in smoothly, recognizes elements but not combo
Tripped into solving it just a little bit
Ahhh moment
Triggered table but missed key, need more for interactables
Revisiting spots helps find keys

Playtest 3:
Quickly understood the mechanic or at least the instructions
Understood the mechanic confirmed
Speedrunning through it

David Notes:
-   Comment that it would be cool if pictures were incomplete (missing information)
-   A player thought they might have been taking the photos at first and was confused when they had two more to use
-   Player needed reaffirmation that the photos needed to be lined up with the environment
-   Players ignored the "E" UI element consistently
    -   Controls could remain on the screen along an edge or corner
-   Many tried to line up the door photo on the walls of the starting area before using the gate photo
    -   We need visible transitions to show the changed environment

- Not great for people without 3D first-person experience. Those without struggled to move, and thus struggled to line up photos due to small tolerances
    - We need feedback for getting closer to station triggers (think a hot/cold meter)
    - Consider telling the player which photo to use in the first station of the game
    - Use photo edges as the hot/cold meter by alpha-ing them out
- One tester who was a gamer took a few attempts (going back and forth between the door and table) to figure out how angle was important
- People do miss the key (needs to be more obvious)
    - For stations, consider checking screen coords of photo vs. designated world coords instead of triggerboxes and checking their rotation.

Gav Notes:

Playtest 1:

Playtest 2:

Playtest 3:

Alfie Notes:

Playtest 1:

Playtest 2:

Playtest 3:

Answering the Questions

Survey Results

Internal

Confused about the instructions:

Instructions were clunky af, and didn't show up consistently for many people. The difference between right and left mouse buttons was too close too, so people got confused between them Many also found the graphics in general cute but very confusing, the right and left mouse buttons in particular. Needed more instructional cues (Swapping pics with E, door is locked and need key) in order to feel complete

Thoughts on the mechanic:

Overall they loved the concept, loved the mechanic and how it works. A few people did comment that their initial response was the particularness of lining up is difficult, especially with how the pics were taken. Probably need more *obvious* points of reference than a tree that blends in and cues that help guide the player where to go (someone suggested the picture lighting up when in the correct spot) Also maybe taking the photos in a consistent manner than randomly sized squares target altered and from achievable spots in the world (This could mean taking the pictures in game once the level is built out)
People continued to have a "I need to recreate this appearance" thought process that we had in the previous playtest which is kinda funny
The change in photograph was also not overt enough so a lot of people didn't know when they actually got the right location (which was difficult to find anyways)

They want a lot more feedback in general (confirmation of the right location, door's locked, indication that you can swap between pictures and not just reveal the first one)

Multiple people thought e took a photo and not just revealing a photo to the player

TL;DR
More reactive feedback to support the mechanic, need visual cues to assist player in lining up, more objects to give 3D to the photos, etc

Got Lost?

They used the photos mostly to guide the way, most of the getting lost seems to be not understanding the controls
Also asked for assistance that the playtesters gave
(So not the level design or the UI)

Most liked:

The concept, the tires, figuring out how the mechanic works/solving a puzzle

Least Liked:

The precise locations needed to match up, gotta make that more interesting
Wanted story
Lack of audio
Lack of cohesion
Wants to jump
Need more instructions

External

Confused about the instructions:

Thoughts on the mechanic:

Got Lost?

Most liked:

Least Liked:

Observations

Internal

Common techniques for figuring out the correct location were flashing the image on the screen
while moving, I assume can be described as shimmy
Consistent presence of people needing hints on E
It's a good thing we baby-proofed the exit, now just to Eric-proof everything else

External