V. Pre-Alpha

"Echoes of the Mind"

Game Design Document

by Maria Nechaeva

2024-2025

INDEX

To Be Continued...

Introduction

"Echoes of the Mind" is a point-and-click adventure game with half-fantasy and half-realistic features. The design of the game is low-poly in a spirit of nostalgic games from the 2000s and is filled with puzzles and dialogues with characters. The game is based on my personal experiences, mixing a made-up fantasy world with grey, real life. It is a final university project.

2D 3D concept

The game exists in two dimensions at a time: the adventure and puzzles happen in 3D, along with the main character walking around the world; on the other hand, all the dialogues happen in 2D, with text on the screen and a two-dimensional illustration of each character.

Characters

The protagonist

The main character in the game is directly based on myself. However, in the beginning of the game it is just a mere grey shell of a character: no texture, no memories, no special traits.
At the end of the game, the protagonist obtains her "skin" back along with her memories and finally is able to see herself in the mirror.

Secondary characters

There are 8 characters in the game apart from the protagonist. All characters are inspired by real people that surround or used to surround me throughout the whole life. Their traits, personalities and way of thinking are portrayed in the game with an extreme exaggeration. A consent has been acquired from all of the people I based the characters on, except one villain (the person I obviously don't like).

The characters are also shown as stereotypical fantasy dream characters.

Getafix

Description: A lone wanderer and a forest protector and the protagonist's companion through the game. He is a druid, nomad, magician, with long hair and a third eye, in a cape and baggy pants, leather boots.

Personality: He is wise and fair, with something to teach or explain. He is very patient and kind, always helping the protagonist.

Specialties: A protagonist's guide through the game. Can see through people or through obstacles with the third eye. Very mindful and wise.

Mokosh

Description: A protagonist's mother (in reality) and a former queen of a fallen Snow Kingdom (in fantasy).

Personality: She is a strict, strong, reasonable character. She has no mercy for those she doesn't like. Along with her kingdom, she lost her snow powers and settled in a small cabin. Her ordinary appearance is revealed at the end of the game.

Specialties: Gives the protagonist hope and comfort .

Koschei

Description: The former king of the snowy kingdom. His recklessness was the reason the kingdom has fallen. He is dressed in an old t-shirt and pants. He wears the crown on his head made of paper.

Personality: He is a fearful, insecure and weak character. He is intense and dishonest, gaslighting those around him.

Specialties: None. Has a history with Victoriana.

Ayra

Description: A traveling merchant. She has lots of valuable goods and food. She has a big backpack stuffed with everything necessary (or not).

Personality: She is a very friendly and talkative character. She has traveled a lot and has seen too much, but she does not lose her optimism, although she is clearly traumatized and anxious.

Specialties: She sells necessary things to the main character that help out throughout the game.

Griselda

Description: An ancient witch of Scandinavian origins, living in the forest since the beginning. She has a big hat and her loyal broom. She uses a tight corset and constantly smokes.

Personality: She is a strong, mysterious and unkind character. She lives deep in the forest in her hut. She speaks with disgust, wears gloves and has a lot to say about others. She is very critical with a lot of pride but if she likes you, she can help.

Specialties: Provides further help with the puzzles after visiting her hub.

River

Description: A forest fairy and a good friend of Getafix. They are a genderless creature, small in size and wearing natural, handmade clothing.

Personality: A curious and kind character, but with their opinions and light criticism. They have no filters when talking and like to bring up any subject. They are intense, fast, but set their limits well.

Specialties: Provides valid criticism and correct points of view (in their honest opinion, of course).

Sir Lancelittle the Seventh

Description: A mighty knight that lost his white horse. He is short, but powerful. He is partially dressed in his armor, as the other parts are "not comfortable". He has his sword stuck in a little hill nearby.

Personality: He has a lot of attitude, but little knowledge of life. His attention span is short, he is quickly distracted. He has a very simple view of life and does not like to think too much about the future. He is pretty clumsy and forgetful.

Specialties: Helps the protagonist to make a final step towards reality. Not from the first time though.

Victoriana

Description: An evil fairy. She was the catalyst for the kingdom's downfall, luring the Koschei into her trap and leaving him with nothing.

Personality: She is a clever character with evil intentions. She is hypocritical and two-faced, mainly using her appearance to lure unsuspecting victims to her traps. She constantly preoccupies herself about her looks.

Specialties: Trying to trick and gaslight the protagonist.

Side characters

Some simple filler characters, to walk around in the background.

World setting

The world in the game consists of 3 locations: The room in an apartment, the Outside and the Real City. There are 2 different settings that the player will find themselves in: the real world and a fantasy one. The protagonist will start in a distorted Room, continuing to a fantasy Outside, ending up in the Real City and coming back to a fixed real Room.

The Room in the Apartment

General description
A simple 3 room apartment in a city center. The main character wakes up losing all their memory in their room of this exact apartment. From the beginning of the first scene, the made-up fantasy details and particles can be seen around the whole apartment, depending also on the movement of the secondary characters around the protagonist.

The Outside

General description
A typical fantasy and forestry looking spacious place with various locations just like in a typical magical adventure game. This will be one of the main locations for the game. It will be slightly changing depending on the outcome of dialogue choices that the character will take. The location may become more or less blurry or confusing throughout the game.

The Real City

General description
A normal outside world as we know it. It is a big busy and grey city with people in a hurry, rushing cars and lots of smoke. Tall skyscrapers and wide roads give the main character the feeling of being small and insignificant.

Backstory and Main Story

<u>The Backstory</u>

The protagonist had a troubling childhood that greatly affected the way she views the world. Most of her memories of the past are confusing and mixed up with made up scenarios she created in order to cope with reality. After yet another traumatic experience, the protagonist completely lost all of her real memories and now has to try her best not to lose sanity and get the memories back.

<u>The Main Story</u>

The main character wakes up on her bed. She is then greeted by her mother who suddenly turns to a Snow Queen and starts talking about her kingdom that she lost. The protagonist is shocked, trying to figure out what happened while realising that she is completely grey with no face, no appearance, nothing. The world around her starts changing as she leaves the apartment to get some fresh air, where she meets Getafix. He guides her towards the forest that he protects and owns, in order to help find the answers to the questions and help her get out of the fantasy. She meets with a villain, Victoriana, that tries to sabotage her traveling by confusing her even more, that's when the protagonist almost loses her mind. However, with collective effort Getafix and she manage to escape. Throughout the adventure in the forest, the main character meets her lost friends that turned to fantasy characters and they all collectively help her during this journey, someone more than the other.

Levels and Key Plot Elements

There are 5 stages of the game with the main plot going through and with 2 characters

- <u>STAGE 1: Exposition</u>
  - MC wakes up in their room. The room looks confusing and partly not real Mokosh (mother) walks in to check up on them.
  - The player gets a vague, confusing introductory inner monologue about what could've happened.

- ○ The player gets a tutorial on how to move and interact with objects; first simple puzzle.
- **STAGE 2: Exposition 2**
  - ○ MC is introduced to Koschei (father) in the entrance of the apartment
  - ○ A dialogue happens with Koschei about the fallen kingdom.
- **Rising Action**
  - ○ MC is introduced to Getafix, he guides her towards the Outside, a new location with the plot progression.
  - ○ MC is introduced to Victoriana and her evil nature, explanation of the Koschei's fallen kingdom.
  - ○ Victoriana sabotages MC by confusing her, damaging her sanity.
- **STAGE 3: Climax**
  - ○ MC tries her hardest not to lose her sanity, gets overwhelmed by the fantasy Outside world, Getafix guides her through the Outside's forest.
  - ○ MC is introduced to Ayra, a traveling merchant that supplies the MC with all things necessary.
  - ○ MC is exposed to the puzzles of the game and is able to buy goods from the merchant.
  - ○ MC is introduced to River, a local fairy. Dialogues happen.
- **STAGE 4: Falling Action**
  - ○ MC is introduced to Griselda, a local witch. Dialogues, puzzles, blessing
  - ○ MC is introduced to Sir Lancelittle the Seventh, a mighty knight. Puzzles, dialogues, comedic integration
  - ○ The Outside world slowly disappears, as the protagonist with Getafix enters the Real City. Final dialogue with Getafix, the fantasy character, that stayed in a disappearing fantasy world.
- **STAGE 5: Resolution**
  - ○ A shortcut of MC walking around the city.
  - ○ MC gets back to the apartment
  - ○ MC waking up in her bed
  - ○ A shortcut of MC looking in the mirror
  - ○ Final inner thoughts and the end of the game

Goals and objectives

The objective of this game is to entertain the player and to provide a personal experience of the character in the game. The dialogues and narration are inspired by my real life events.

The goal inside the game is to complete puzzles and maintain character's sanity on an adequate level.

Sanity bar

There is a sanity bar in the game. By solving puzzles, the player maintains the bar on a high level. If the puzzles are solved incorrectly, the bar will be lower.

If the bar goes down to a minimal amount (important: it will never be zero), the player will experience the series of changes on the screen to indicate the struggles the character goes through.

There is a stage in the game, the interaction with Victoriana, that intentionally lowers the sanity bar in order to show the effects. The bar then goes back to normal.

Traveling merchant Ayra sells potions and food that raises sanity level. The amount of the "healing" depends on each product the player bought.

Puzzles

The puzzles in the game provide an entertaining part, filling the game with obstacles and makes the player think critically or logically. There are various puzzles that challenge various skills of the player.

A forest labyrinth

Jigsaw puzzle of the bridge

Chess game

Pulling game

Shadow puzzle

Dialogues

The dialogues in the game are a crucial part of the game. The interaction with each character is important to the main story of the game and provides the player with different points of view on life and on some social or philosophical topics.

The dialogues are made in the form of a narration, with the rare ability to choose the answer/line in conversations.

Audiovisuals

The game will have background noises and music in certain parts throughout the experience. However, the dialogues will not be voiced and will be shown on the screen.

Platforms

The game will be playable on the PC with any operating system and will not be heavy for the user's computer. The game will be realized on Unreal Engine with the help of various developers and other platforms and programs.

Interface and gameplay

Although the game is a mix of 2D and 3D, the interface will be solely made in 2D.
The player will have a sanity bar on the top right screen and a goods inventory at the bottom right screen.

UI UX

The tips will be shown on loading screens. The player will have a tutorial shown for each puzzle and an explanation for a new area/stage. The player will have a first person view, moving the character around with WASD standard style.

Mechanics and Systems

Interactivity

The game interacts with a player in many ways. It makes the player start questioning some positions and/or decisions made, it shows the player different approaches to life and most importantly, it shows that you can view a serious problem from a more simple point of view in order to not struggle with it so much. The game teaches us that a fun approach to a serious topic can even help go through it easier.

Personal influence on the game

I was born and raised in Russia for 16 years, then immigrating to Spain to settle here for the rest of my life. My mentality is different from that of people in Europe, although I am becoming more integrated into Spanish society every day. My perception of myself is very mixed and confused, since with immigration and two very different mentalities mixed within me, I find it very difficult to understand who I really am now. This confusion inspired me to create a game, as my final project for my university degree. This game is about the search for the inner "I".

I have long realized that sometimes I feel like I am part of a game. Ordinary day-to-day goals have become challenges that I must do in order to "move forward", which I find fun and helps me with anxiety about certain things. I decided to demonstrate these struggles, memory loss and confusion about reality,

through a virtual game, thus explaining that even such a serious problem can be perceived from a simple, light and fun point of view.

University project

This project is a Final Degree Project and is supposed to be presented as a sole non-playable demo of the game.
However, there are plans of developing it even further, making a whole playable game someday. There is dedication and a loyal team on my side.

Team

As of right now, the game developing team consists of two determined and stubborn people and one university supervisor.

Calendar

There are some plans for this game for the future. For now, the plans are following:

January	Start research on necessary programs and referents for UI UX
February	Make 3D models, scenes, objects, ambience
March	Start exploring Unreal Engine, make animations
April	Finish up Game Design Document, Artbook, start preparing for demo
May	Catch up on everything that is behind schedule, 3D working
June	Make the demo animation, prepare for presentation
July	Present the demo, Artbook and GDD
August	Prepare for further work, research programming, make connections

To be continued...