

Karimah's Paracosm: Project Proposal

Title explanation:

Karimah is a girl's name of Arabic origin with a meaning of "generous". Even though it is an Arabic word, many black families name their baby girl with this beautiful name, referring to our protagonist, a black girl.

"Paracosm" = imaginary world, often created in childhood. It comes from the Greek word for world, "cosmos". It refers to our protagonist's imaginative hair braiding x handicraft, and the natural world.

Paracosm Worlds. (2022). *Paracosm Worlds*. Available at: <https://paracosmworlds.wordpress.com/> [Accessed 9 Jan. 2026].

The Team & Our Roles

- Esi Amoah: Programmer, Environment Artist (3D), Narrative Designer, BGM designer
- Hayley Sum: Programmer, Environment Artist (2D), Character Designer, UI Designer, BGM Designer

Our Goals:

Our personal goals with this project:

1. Raise awareness of childhood neglect in an abusive family, how children pay attention to small details that adults do not realise they may understand.
2. Bring attention to different kinds of Arts and Crafts.
3. Show off doll customisation.
4. Make audiences from different races feel related and find comfort within our characters.
5. At least 15 minutes of gameplay.

Our professional goals with this project:

1. To express our interest in diverse perspectives on play, especially from the perspective of a child. There can be a broader discussion on how young children's points of view are seen in the video game industry.
2. To prove that we can make a short exploration game with a deeper narrative.
3. Create a good portfolio piece that demonstrates our ability to see a design philosophy through.

Abstract:

“You play as an imaginative little girl helping to maintain your dolls and their village that you created using arts and crafts supplies. Help them with their task, such as cutting shapes out of paper, braiding their hair, and painting, while you learn more about their lives. The fantasy is perfect — until conversations from the real world start seeping in, and eventually, you are forced to confront your reality.”

Reasons for choice: We wanted to combine our ideas and thought of merging childhood with the various handicrafts that kids can do. We also both wanted a deeper story, so this was the perfect game to explore that.

Genre:

A 2.5 First-person narrative-heavy, interactive exploration game.

Your Hook:

You're just an imaginative little girl playing in her crafted world, but you can't escape your reality forever. Which will you choose in the end?

Your Anchor:

- The inclusion of Art and Craft minigames: many people have seen or done arts and crafts, including braiding, painting and paper-cutting. This should make it familiar to the player.
- Digital watercolour & 3D collage-inspired layered paper crafts: Both mediums are beautiful, making the combination interesting for use in a video game.
- Culturally inspired characters: Characters from 3 different races

The Appeal:

Steam store page: A title written in colourful bubble words with a pencil to showcase our childish theme. The words are designed with our game elements (chat boxes, scissors, paper cuts, hair braids); most importantly, some words are cracked to show we actually have dark twists.

A concept art shows the crafting fantasy world, dolls playing around together and getting their hair braided, while the edges of the background are getting dark/looking like something that is off...

Here are our core design pillars below that demonstrate “the appeal” of the game:

Design Pillar	Description
Creative fantasy world	Our world for dolls, combines the concept of nature, handicraft, hair braiding and 2.5 D effects, providing an abundant creativity game environment to players.
Dolls & Interactivity	1. Mini games are players helping with the doll's beauty care. 2. Dolls will give comments based on your performance in the mini games, receiving emotional interactions with the dolls. 3. Players can drag dolls with 3D hands, which imitates playing with dolls.
Relatable and comforting characters	1. The doll characters are from different races: Black, White and Asian, designed with their cultural signature braids. Many players will find their culture within these adorable characters and feel included. 2. Some players had or are experiencing domestic abuse, like the protagonist. They may feel relatable and have empathy towards her.
Our unique hair braiding game feature	1. Players can simulate with actual "hair braiding". Players have 3 strips of hair to access with, cross toward each one to imitate actual hair braiding. There are many hair salon games in the market, but they are either slowly generating the image of hair braids/ choosing and clicking a hairstyle for characters. 2. Different types of hair braids to choose to enjoy. Our game comes across with 3 different races/countries' hair braiding culture (African, French, Chinese traditional)

Unexpected dark twist in a childish art-style game	Players first enter into a brightly coloured, imaginative game environment. As the events of the game take place, it will slowly crack down into a dark reality by the flow of the story, creating a big contrast to the cute, imaginative world.
Craftiness	From game mechanics to character design to environment design, they all include crafty elements. This game aims to provide the best crafty gaming environment.

To summarise our core design philosophies:

- Access different handicrafts with 3 mini games
- Interact with the dolls
- Strong narrative with a dark twist
- Players feel comfortable with different cultures shown
- Raising awareness about child abuse.
- Players can experience multiple fun game elements step by step.

Based on what came before:

Our ideas had a similar point: the fact that they were both Handicrafts that require a substantial amount of skill, time and effort. We were both interested in the different aspects of crafts that humans do by hand. Here is a short excerpt of our previous ideas.

Hayley's previous idea and research:

- **Original game idea:** It was a one-player mobile game inspired by early browser games 10 years ago / TikTok filter games nowadays. Based on Bobbin Laces.
- **Gameplay features:** small scale, exciting, easy and difficult at the same time, always have a short time limit.
- **Mechanic:** 6 lace bobbins. Players access with 6 numbered bobbins, the screen will pop up random numbers from 1-6, and players have to follow and cross the numbered bobbins towards each other to form a lace pattern. Players who successfully form a lace pattern within a 30 time limit will be considered a win.
- **Concept:** Combining the idea of handcraft and natural environment, with early 10s browser gameplay, provides a delicate visual while an exciting gameplay experience

Esi's previous idea and research:

- **Original game idea:** Childhood Doll Braiding (2nd Idea). Based on the mundane activity of being in a salon with adults around you, gossiping. This is a situation I've been in many times before, and I thought it would be fun to make into a game.
- **Mechanic:** Braid the hair, and craft different styles – the more you braid successfully, the less bored she is. Braid by solving puzzles, there will be different keyboard/controller combinations or small sliding puzzles within a time limit to complete. Snippets of adult conversations will leak into the girls' world, and you must try to understand them from her perspective without upsetting adults with your questions. You can win by discovering the truth, and there will be a cutscene at the end.
- **Concept:** I love the idea of combining childhood, a stage of innocence and ignorance, with braiding, a craft that encourages community and fosters relationships between salon-goers. It is also based on personal experiences of being a child and not being taken seriously as a person, so I feel like that experience is worth highlighting. It is cool to show how mundane situations, like a child playing with a doll, can reveal a bigger threat.

The Mechanics:

- **Drag-n-drop:** Play around with the world by moving 3D objects with your hands.
- **Adult conversations:** These will pop up randomly in-game.
 - Find out the truth by trying to decipher what they are arguing about downstairs.
 - Ignore the conversations by blocking them out.
- **Minigames:** You can trigger these by interacting with the dolls.
 - Braiding: You get 3 strips of hair and braid the doll's hair until it is done.
 - Painting: Use a tiny brush to paint onto the doll's body, creating an elegant piece.
 - Paper and Scissors: Use this to create paper cut-outs and add them to the in-game world.

Win/fail state:

Win state

- When players finish the activities of mini games (hair braiding, paper cutting and painting)
- Dolls will have comments based on your results, but it will not trigger a fail state, even if the comments are negative.

Fail State

- None.

Essential Experiences:

Creative Caring/Art therapy: Players help adorable dolls with their hair braiding, body painting and paper crafting in an adorable childish game world, providing a cosy and healing game experience.

Emotionally impacted narrative: Players are role-playing as an 8-year-old little girl under an emotionally abusive family, which can evoke deep thoughts and reflection towards the social issue, familial abuse.

Alternative universe exploring: Players are playing with dolls in a 2.5D fantasy world, the world is created in a structure of hair-braiding, handcrafted elements, drawn with pencils, painted with watercolour, and crafted in layered paper art.

Audience (UX Analysis):

We have identified 6 demographics:

- Fans of narrative-heavy stories
- Those who are into beautiful visuals
- Those into beauty styling/makeovers
- Fans of single-player casual game experiences
- Those nostalgic for the childlike aesthetics
- Those concerned/curious about social problems within the family structure

Therefore, the intended audience is young women who are into narrative-heavy, single-player, and nostalgic experiences that also explore a darker side of childhood. These players may or may not also be drawn to the visual and styling aspect of the game.

Below are articles of Hayley's research about why cosy games are gaining popularity among young women. These are the analyses:

1. **Emotional needs:** young women describe cosy games as like their best friends, the gameplay is relaxing, which helps them to chill out, and satisfies their daily emotional needs.
2. **They are simple:** Cosy games don't require a certain skill set, are non-threatening, and can be enjoyed anywhere. Some girls do not enjoy violent games, and do not have a complete game set up. Cosy games do not contain violent elements and only require small game consoles (e.g NDS, Nintendo Switch), so that it is easier for girl players who are into these girly aesthetics.
3. **The Popularity of soft aesthetics among young ladies:** Cosy games usually prioritise soft aesthetics such as nature-based themes, pastel colours or cartoon animals, which are visually appealing towards young ladies.
4. **Young women's common interest:** Cosy games are usually associated with activities such as puzzle solving, farming and cooking, which simulate their personal interest.

Taylor, H. (2025). *Escapist, idyllic simplicity: Behold the quiet rebellion of 'cosy gaming'*. Cosmopolitan. Available at: <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/reports/a63442260/cosy-gaming-feminism/>

England, W. (2022). *The Rise of Cozy Gaming And What It Means for Women*. Medium. Available at: <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/reports/a63442260/cosy-gaming-feminism/>

Exemplar Demographic Profile of Potential Customers



Name	Lily
Age & Gender	22, Female
Job	Graphic designer
Preferred Platforms	Mobile, PC
Playtime per week	5 hours per week
Interested in these game genres	Cosy game, Narrative-based game
Favourite games	Little Misfortune, Florence, Disney Dreamlight Valley
Why do they play games?	For relaxation, uncovering mysteries, unique and diverse player points of view
Gaming Dislikes	Boring or non-existent story, socialising in games (MMOs)
Interests	Arts and Crafts, Painting, Reading, Baking
Personality	Easy-going, Anxious, Deep thinker, Crafty



Name	Michelle
Age & Gender	18, Female
Job	Student
Preferred Platforms	PC
Playtime per week	13 hours per week
Interested in these game genres	Raising Simulation Games
Favourite games	Animal Crossing: New Horizons, Shining Nikki, My Talking Angela
Why do they play games?	To kill time, personal interest
Gaming Dislikes	NSFW games
Interests	Girly aesthetics, childish nostalgia, internet, social topics, movies
Personality	Introvert, caring, patient



Name	Jay
Age & Gender	23, Male
Job	Med Student
Preferred Platforms	PC
Playtime per week	8 hours per week
Interested in these game genres	Simulation Games, RPG Games, Action-Shooter Games
Favourite games	Animal Crossing: New Leaf, The Sims, Overwatch, Mario
Why do they play games?	Winding down from work, A new experience, comfort, nostalgia
Gaming Dislikes	Loot Boxes, Rude players
Interests	Nostalgia, DIY, Movies
Personality	Open-minded, Passionate, Friendly

Competitors (UX Analysis):



Game Name	Genre	Description	Mechanics of this Game	Similarities between this game and ours	How our game stands out compared to these games	Their audiences
Little Misfortune (2019)	Horror Adventure	Misfortune, a self-described "little lady", is guided by a voice in her head, which she names Mr Voice, in a game to seek the prize of eternal happiness for her mother.	- You can throw glitter to "bring happiness" - Make choices that impact the wider story.	Little Misfortune is a little girl, much like our game's protagonist. She is unaware of the dangers of the world around her and the dark reality of it. Topics such as suicide, depression, nudity, and traffic collisions are covered in this game. In our game, the	Rather than in a third-person perspective, you become the girl in a first-person perspective and see everything through her eyes. While our game implies emotional neglect, and thus child abuse, it is seen in a much more whimsical lens before the reality hits. I think	Young people, or people who like single-player narrative games

				protagonist lives in her own world and is rather childish, much like Little Misfortune, but she is more aware that something bad is happening in the real world, which is why she wants to escape.	this can set it apart from a game like Little Misfortune, as it could make the reality disturbing.	
Imagine Teacher (DS) (2008)	Simulation / Puzzle	You assume the role of a Teacher who takes over a school that has just been built.	- Minigames within the school, with a time limit - Organising the lessons for each day makes gameplay unique to the player.	The minigames that occur in this game are much like the ones in our game, except we have removed the time limit. The minigame element adds to the simulation - when you play them, you take on the role of a child in the class, and then you are graded on how well you did.	The game's perspective is from a teacher for most of the game, and from one of the students when doing the minigames. In our game, the perspective is only from the child throughout, which may make it more immersive than the former. However, we recognise that this and our game have two different purposes.	Young girls, 5 - 12 years range, who like simulation games
Art Flash Games (Pottery master)	Simulation	N/A, based on flash games from the 00s, these games cover common handicrafts like pottery, painting, braiding, and jewellery making. Both of us have played games like these when we were children.	- Quick amusement - Gameplay focused on one craft, e.g painting - Flashy visuals to catch children's eyes	The minigame element is the same. Many of these games also have a time limit, which our game will not, so the player can take however they need.	We include adorable art style, characters from different races, an imaginative world setting, and meaningful messages. These attract players to develop deeper engagement with our game.	13-18-year-old teenage girls who enjoy PC/ browser games
Braid Spa Hair Salon	Simulation	You are a hair stylist helping your customers to wash their hair and style it afterwards.	- Multiple selection of hairstyles and accessories - The styling process is from zero to one, starting with	Have a colourful vision to attract the audience. Hair makeover gaming experience, however, lots of hair makeover games, including	Our game values the concept of "braiding" instead; we are dedicated to recreating different braiding processes	5-10-year-old iPad kids

			washing their hair, then drying it and decorating it. It helps children learn the hair makeover process. • Colourful and sparkling environment and other mechanics (hair colour, hair dryer, accessories) to catch children's eyes	this, are "generating" hairstyles instead of imitating the actual styling process.		
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[Hayley's game review on Art Flash game \(pottery master\) and hair salon games](#)

Critical Analysis:

Our game challenged the stereotype that mini-games only provide quick amusement by focusing on a narrative about the consequences of domestic violence, featuring interactiveness between players and doll characters. With our heavy narrative, multiple mini games and creative characters and environment design, our game has potential to develop as a free-to-play game/ game with a reward system. Unfortunately, our game development time is too short, and our development team does not have any engagement after the release, so we could not make it. Overall, players can enjoy handicraft gaming and impactful storytelling despite our short gameplay time.

What are the risks with this idea?

1. **Time management:** We are involving lots of components in our game, and there are lots of skills required, while our developing team is only two people, time management will be a challenge to work with everything

2. **Not appealing to male audiences:** Our game is a soft, nature-based theme, and only includes female characters; male audiences may not feel related to or find interest in our game

3. **Not challenging:** As our game is heavily narrative-based, it does not require a certain skill set to clear; some audiences may find it boring and quit if they prefer challenging games or are not interested in our story from the beginning.

4. Misrepresentation of difficult/serious subject matters: The game covers child neglect, which neither of the developing team members has experienced; some audiences may be offended when they find out non-victims are talking about their issues. There is a chance for misinformation to be spread, as we do not have first-hand information about domestic abuse.

- To address this issue, here is our research and analysis on the sensitivity of the subjects we will be covering in the game, as it is a major plot point of the game:
[Subject Sensitivity Research – Esi Amoah](#)
[Subject Sensitivity Research - Hayley](#)

How will we handle the scope?

- **Scale back on what we can afford to lose.** Things like some of the BGM, Props, and 1 Minigame can afford to be lost if we feel that it is getting overwhelming.
- **Include a content warning before the game starts.** When players click on our start button, a disclaimer box pops up, saying our game includes sensitive topics and might cause discomfort. Let players think they should continue after knowing our idea.
- **Remember the core idea.** Girl in an imaginary world, adult conversations, childish visuals.
- **Don't try anything too new.** Our team's major weakness is that we do not have a proficiency in programming. However, Hayley is confident in Art and Music, and Esi is confident with 3D modelling, music and narrative, so we still have an extensive skill set.
- **Playtest.** See what players find interesting. Add more of that and remove what isn't as popular if need be.

Content

Components (Deliverables):

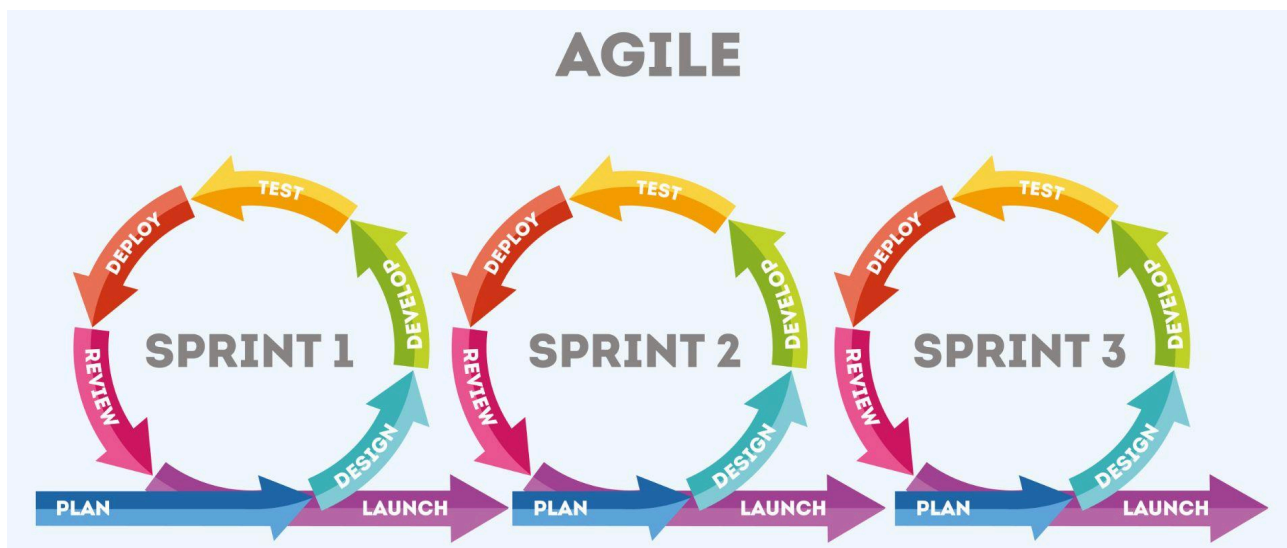
1. 2.5D hair braiding x handcraft fantasy environment x1
2. 2.5D protagonist's room reality world x1
3. 8-year-old protagonist
4. Doll characters (Ghanaian, French, Chinese)
5. Chibi version of all characters
6. 3D model of the protagonist's hands
7. BGMs (main theme, mini games theme x3, reality world music x2)
8. Mini game screens (Braiding, Paper cutting, Painting)
9. Adult conversation bubbles
10. Colourful bubble pencil words

Functional Specs:

- **Unity** - this is the platform we will be making the game on.
- **Blender** - Esi will be modelling some background props with this software. Props will then be put into Unity as FBX files.

- **Visual Studio** - This is what we will use to code the game with.
- **MuseScore** - This is what we will use to make the BGM. Hayley has some experience with this program.
- **Ultrabox/Abyssbox** - Esi will be using this to make BGM as well.
- **Photoshop** - For making textures and drawing some props. Esi has some experience with this program; Hayley will be learning.
- **Clip Studio Paint** - For Hayley's 2D art design.
- **Adobe Stock** - To gather references for the project.
- **Coloured paper cards and other handicraft tools** - Esi may be making layered paper art for the promotion of the game (if we have time).

Project Structure



We have decided to use the AGILE framework for our project structure. Each sprint has a plan, design, develop, test, deploy and review stage; these all have a specific target we need to reach at the end of it. We thought this was the most useful methodology as it gave both of us a clear goal. We have 12 total weeks of work. Each sprint will be split over 2 weeks, giving us time to complete specific goals.

Schedule (Esi & Hayley)

Here is an idea of what the first 3 sprints could look like.

Sprint 1 (Jan 26th - 8nd Feb):

- Hands 3D Modelled with animation
- First background done, keep on with the character designs
- Start programming

Sprint 2 (Feb 9th - 22nd Feb):

- Hand as FBX into Unity, and test the hands.
- Code the hands to move in sync with the player character.
- Background and some characters imported.
- Continue with the characters.
- Unity Scene Set-up.
- Start making music.
- Continue programming.

Sprint 3 (Feb 23rd - 8th March):

- Work on narrative and dialogue.
- Draw mechanics (paper/scissors, painting, and braiding).

The final 2 weeks (**8th to 20th May**) will be polishing, playtesting and major bug fixing. There should be roughly 6 builds for each playtest.

Design Appendix

Presentations:

Week 3 Initial Presentation (Phase 1): [Hayley](#) | [Esi](#)

Week 5 Presentations (Phase 2): [Hayley](#) | [Esi](#)

Week 9 Presentations (Phase 3): [Hayley](#) | [Esi](#)

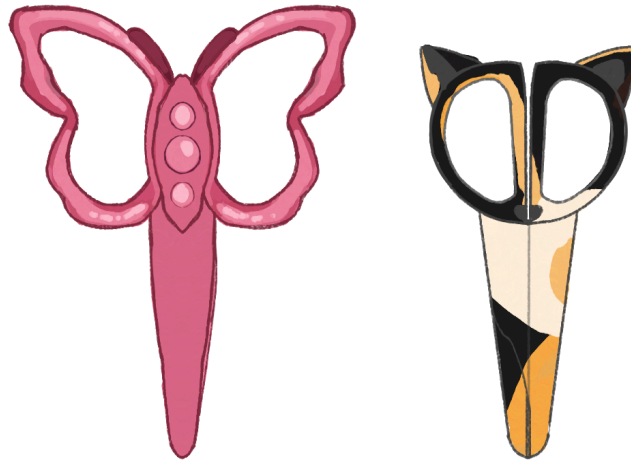
Week 11 Presentation: [Together](#)

Concepts / Sketchbook Work

Concepts of preliminary designs for visual aspects of your project. Examples of screen layouts, characters, graphics, mood boards and colours etc in digital formats. Including research materials, inspirations, influences, URL's, bibliography, brainstorming, drawings, sketches, screens etc. this is your general creative process.

Esi

- Brainstorming: [Brainstorming Concepts](#)   – Esi Amoah
- 3D Modelling Draft: [3D Modelling Practice \(Hands\)](#) – Esi Amoah
- Child's Scissors (Image Below)



- Music & Sound: [Music & Sound Design – Esi Amoah](#)



Hayley:

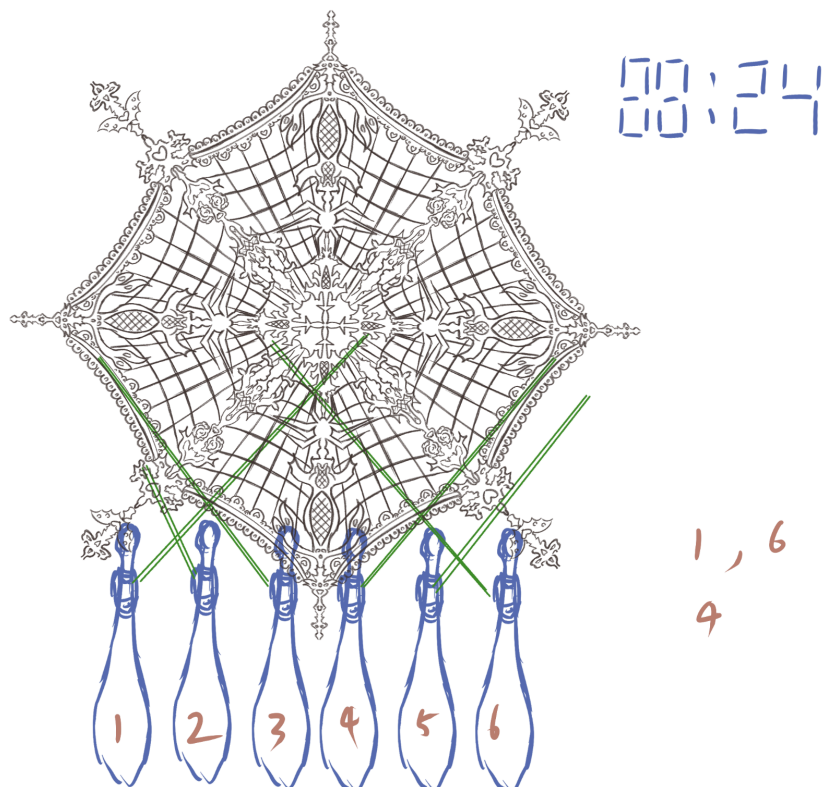
- Brainstorms after we decided to team up
- Character designs
- Music design
- Icon design

- Environment design



Prototypes:

Prototype of "Based on what came before" - **Hayley's bobbin lace game**



Prototypes “Based on what came before” - **Esi’s Game Ideas 1, 2, and 3**



“Drag and Drop” Concept for Karimah’s Paracosm (Made in Photoshop):

