

Overview

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Written by E-Jay

Game Title:

Haerenga

Genre:

Platformer, Adventure, Puzzle game

Key Themes:

Polynesian Mythology Inspired, Difficult and precise platforming, Astronavigation

Game summary:

Cast into a raging storm and stripped of all divine power, a demigod awakens on the shore of an uncharted island. Explore the archipelago using fluid platforming movements, leaping across cliffs, clinging onto vines, and jumping higher mid air. With each island you explore, you receive a new ability that reshapes how you traverse the next area, opening opportunities for challenges. Departing each island requires you to navigate by using the stars, chart constellations in order to safely reach your next destination

Your journey is in search for your magical fish hook, an artefact that stores your immense power. As storms continue to rage and the heavens watch from above, reclaim your power, become a master of land and sea, and discover artefacts of the distant past in this myth inspired adventure.

The appeal:

Players that enjoy tight and precise platforming movement; hand-drawn visuals and a polynesian-inspired environment

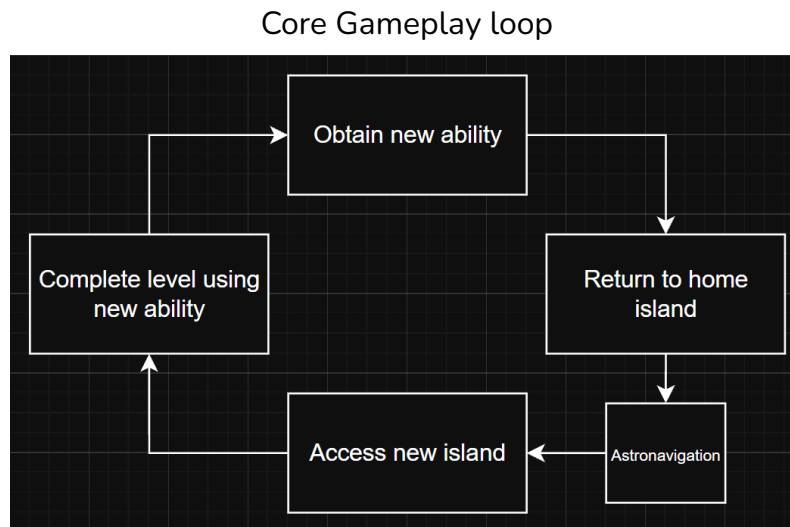
Tone and atmosphere:

Tone -> Intense and Charming: The core gameplay involves challenging platforming but with a cosy, hand-drawn art style - which is contrasted with calming star-gazing scenes

Atmosphere -> Dynamic and Culturally-inspired: Contrasting environments from peaceful beaches and intense island platforming sections - inspired by polynesian culture in many aspects

User Experience

Gameplay Loop(s)



The core gameplay loop of the game will be that the player sails to an island from the “Home island” and obtains a new movement ability upon completing the island (Platforming to the end of the level). With this new ability they are able to navigate to a new island (By using this new ability to access areas of the “Home Island” that weren’t available before - or by communicating with the gods). Which repeats until the player is able to completely fix their magical fish hook.

Essential Experience

Outside of platforming levels on each of the islands, we want the player to feel like they are truly exploring a polynesian archipelago, finding new nuances between every island and signs of the culture of the area.

During platforming sections, players should approach them as puzzles, where their actions and inputs must be precise and planned in order to complete the level - at all or as efficiently as possible.

Furthermore, the game's aesthetics and environment will be heavily inspired by polynesian culture.

Win/Fail State

Win State(s) -> Player successfully completes astronavigation puzzle to reach a new island
Player reaches the end of the island to unlock a new movement ability

Fail State -> A 'Fail State' implies a scenario where the player is **unable** to reach a win state but in this game the player is always able to reach a win state if they keep playing

Difficulty

Throughout the game, the difficulty of the astronavigation puzzles and the platforming will increase - starting extremely easy. However, players will be able to choose platforming routes that are faster but objectively harder. Plus, there will be optional astronavigation puzzles that will be much harder than the ones necessary to beat the game.

Controls

The player will be able to use a controller or a keyboard and mouse - depending on their preference. There will also be a setting where the player can remap their controls if they also choose to do that.

Accessibility

During NPC dialogue sections, there will be subtitles; plus, a setting where the player can remap their inputs. However, given our scope and abilities, a colour-blind option might not be viable.

Platforms

PC + Controller support

Team

Team

SWOT Analysis

Paula = Highlighted in pink

EJay = Highlighted in blue

Blank = Applies to both

Strengths: Areas I'm doing well in	Weaknesses: Areas need improving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Passionate about leading the artistic direction, creating assets, and refining my skills ● Communicating with peers for feedback and suggestions ● Can handle immense criticism; Encourages people to be blunt with work. ● Able to produce multiple concepts, distinctive concepts relatively efficient ● Passionate about programming and designing the game ● Experience with 2D game creation in Unity and playing Platformer / Puzzle Games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Not that knowledgeable on pipelines other than mine; could be a bigger problem down the line when it comes to implementing assets ● Not familiar with workflows that import assets into the game engine - Unity Animator, Tilemaps etc. ● Unfamiliar with Unity's new input system - adding controller input, changing inputs in settings etc. ● Only some experience with creating scalable systems and/or workflows
Opportunities: External Factors that can continue to develop my strengths	Threats: Potential risks/problems caused by external factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Compressed timeline offers me an opportunity to try out a new workflow ● Offers a new portfolio piece; this short project can showcase my adaptability, concepting skills and refine my speed. ● Precise deadline keeps me focused and not overly ambitious 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Health ● Personal affairs ● Scope may change ● Time management

The following will outline the skills and roles we each have for certain aspects of the projects, however, these aren't entirely rigid and we will be helping each other when necessary.

E-Jay

Programmer and Designer

- Creating platforming mechanics + Player controller
- Star-navigation puzzle mechanic
- Platformer Level Design
- Astronavigation Puzzle Design

'Why did I want to create this game?'

I wanted to combine my love for 2D games with tight platforming mechanics - like Celeste, Hollow Knight, etc. - with the research I had done into Astronavigation. I also want to learn more about the smaller nuances of creating a *really* good player controller and working alongside Paula will let me fully focus on the game design and programming.

Paula

2D Artist and Animator

- 2D Art asset creation
 - Environment Art
 - Character Art + Animation
- Visual Effects
- UI Art components

"Why did I want to join this game and not others?"

I initially joined this game concept for two reasons: One of them being that me and E-Jay already have great chemistry outside of work related reasons and I personally wanted to see what would happen if we combined both of our complimentary strengths, me being art oriented and E-Jay dedicating his efforts in programming and design. The other reason being that by joining up together, I know this game would provide me full art direction responsibility and explore my creativity with no boundaries.

Personal goals

E-Jay

During this project, I want to be able to build my knowledge of Unity as a whole - not just improving my C# skills but also utilizing and learning about the tools that Unity has to offer (Tilemaps, Particle systems, etc.) and to learn to work closely with other disciplines during game development. Also being able to practice working in a team, improving my communication skills and comprehension of other aspects of game design. Lastly, having a deadline for a project where I have so much control will force me to improve my time management skills - forcing me to choose what aspects of the game hold more importance, and which I should prioritise over others.

Paula

This project, I hope to build on my soft skills such as time management, which is a skill I'm still continuing to develop, but with my role involving the creation of all assets, I will have to divide my time accordingly. I also want to continue to grow my communication skills. Other than myself, I will be relying on another person to make this project come to fruition, it's imperative that I communicate my ideas and limitations within the project. As for hard skills, I will be learning 2D animation, which is something that I have been actively avoiding since it's one of the aspects in 2D art that I have little knowledge in. I am to be adequate in this aspect by the end of this project. I will also be taking care of the UI, I want to make an interface that suits the needs of our game and not overwhelm the player.

Existing Competition / Target Market

Existing Competition / Target Market

Written by Paula

Target Audience:

- PEGI 7: The game does not include any violence. However, the game is also challenging in terms of gameplay mechanics. Our target audience is from the 15-
- Polynesian culture / geographical make up: For those who want an island adventure with some cultural elements.
- Challenging: The game is made for people who love difficult platformers and self improvement game loops
- Visually Stunning: For people that appreciate the visuals as much as the game play loops.

Demographic Profile

Age	24
Sex	M
Education level	Bachelors degree
Income	£27,000
Favourite games	Celeste, Coral Island, Hollow Knight
Hobbies / Interests	Gardening, hiking, fishing
Personality	Inquisitive, patient, tolerant of failure
Game values	Appreciates strong level design, focus on visuals. Dislikes microtransactions and pay to win systems
Platform	PC, PlayStation

Competitive Analysis

In the section below, I have compiled previous research to write up competitive analysis on existing games in the market. This includes delving deeper into art, sound, and world building.

SpiritFarer



Release date: 18th August 2020

Genre: Adventure, platformer, construction and management, simulation

Platform(s): PC, Xbox, PlayStation, Nintendo Switch, Mac

Price: £24.99

Developers: ThunderLotusGames

SpiritFarer is a 2D management and exploration game with a central theme of death, loss, and learning how to say goodbye. The player explores the world through Stella, who is a ferrymaster responsible for leading spirits to the afterlife. You travel the vast ocean and explore several cosy islands that contribute to the game's calming atmosphere.

The islands in SpiritFarer play an essential role in the gameplay and narrative. Each island has its own visual identity, mood, and purpose. These ranging environments keep the player engaged, rather than each island having the same generic look and feel. The islands have their own purpose and are tied down to the spirit Stella will guide, giving them more emotional value beyond just their mechanical function. We took inspiration from this game regarding island hopping. Although it's too early and perhaps out of scope at this stage to say whether

each island will have their own aesthetic, this approach allows us to discover, whilst also keeping our arms open for further opportunities relating to narrative.

Additionally, the aesthetic of SpiritFarer is a key element to shaping the player's emotional experience. SpiritFarer has a hand-drawn art style with soft, muted colour palettes, and a fluid animation to create a cosy atmosphere, despite the overarching theme of loss and death. As previously said, each island has its own mood and feel to match the spirit such as natural coastal beaches, or coral inspired coastlines, flourishing nature or dilapidated environments. This approach exhibits how strong, cohesive visuals can reinforce storytelling and an emotional tone, making the world feel lively whilst simultaneously comforting the player.

Hollow Knight



Release date: 24 February 2017

Genre: Metroidvania, action-fighting, adventure

Platforms: Nintendo Switch, PlayStation, Xbox, PC

Price: £12.79

Developers: Team Cherry

Hollow Knight is a 2D action platformer set under the kingdom of Hallownest. The player explores this diminishing world through the eyes of a small bug knight. As the small knight travels through the kingdom, they encounter other bug-like creatures, however, not all of them

are friendly. Some of these creatures have been corrupted with a mysterious illness called the infection that makes them behave uncivilised.

Most of this game's lore is spread throughout the map and is subtle, rather than telling the player outright. Much of the game's background can be revealed through interacting with the environment and item descriptions. This encourages players to explore the nest as much as possible to put pieces together and find out the story behind each side quest / overarching story. This approach adds depth to the world and makes it feel much more alive. Although our game doesn't have a rich background as Hollow Knight's, there will be interactable pieces throughout certain levels and players can interact with these; the items don't hold much value other than to educate and add atmosphere.

Another point worthy of note is how crucial sound and music play a part in this game. Each area of the next has a specific sound or OST, ranging from melancholic to grandiose. Music often fades into the background during exploration which allows ambient sounds such as dripstones or crystals crackling. During boss fights, music crescendos and becomes more intense to match the setting, reinforcing urgency and doom. The careful craftsmanship of the music and sound design deepens the emotional impact of the game.

Due to its unparalleled popularity in the indie game's space, competing against this game is unrealistic. However, rather than trying to rival this game, it would be more beneficial to prioritise on contained experience and our own design goals.

Gris



Release date: 13th December 2018

Genre: Platform game, puzzle, adventure,

Platforms: Nintendo Switch, PlayStation, PC, iOS

Price: £12.79

Developers: Nomada Studio

Gris is also a platformer, however the main focus is shifted onto the puzzles and unique visuals. The player ventures through Gris' crumbling world; she is a young girl suffering a traumatic, grief ridden experience and your job as the player is to help her navigate through the different stages of grief. Each stage of grief is represented through a different colour, shape, language, and sound design, allowing the player to connect to Gris' journey.

Unlike Hollow Knight, this game is relatively linear. Once a level is completed, the player doesn't have to go back. However, there are some stages that require the player to move around and explore without any guidance. This lack of direction can sometimes be annoying, but it's also a metaphor for having no sense of self during such a vulnerable time in your life; confusion can be all encompassing and Gris encapsulates this beautifully through this metaphor. There is also a lack of enemies or things that can harm Gris which shifts the focus entirely from small challenges toward the bigger picture— self reflection and problem solving.

Another notable aspect of Gris, is that in comparison to most games out there, this is relatively short. It can be played in less than 3 hours. This allows players to learn new mechanics in a short time and on to the next without getting bored of the same things over and over again. The short run time also allows players to remain emotionally engaged throughout the game play, making the experience feel complete.

As a result of its strong artistic identity and emotional impact on the environmental story telling, Gris stands out in the Indie game space. Competing with this game as someone that hasn't fully developed her style (me, Paula), does feel a bit daunting. However, that being said, this project allows room for new artistic development and adventure. Our game differentiates itself through its difficult platform style and entirely different aesthetic.

Critical Analysis

Critical Analysis

Link to critical analysis of the environment

<https://sites.wsagames.com/pv2g23-yr3/2026/01/08/critical-analysis/>

Link to critical analysis of our cultural inspiration

<https://sites.wsagames.com/et4g23-yr3/2026/01/10/polynesian-culture-research/>

Link to analysis of scope

<https://sites.wsagames.com/et4g23-yr3/2026/01/11/research-analysis-of-scope/>

Project Content

Project Content

Components

- Unity Game: 2D Adventure, Puzzle, Platforming game - Explore an archipelago to find pieces of your broken magical fishhook, and use the stars to navigate between each island.
- Arcade Event: Showcasing the game at an event in London, where we can talk about our game and allow guests to play it

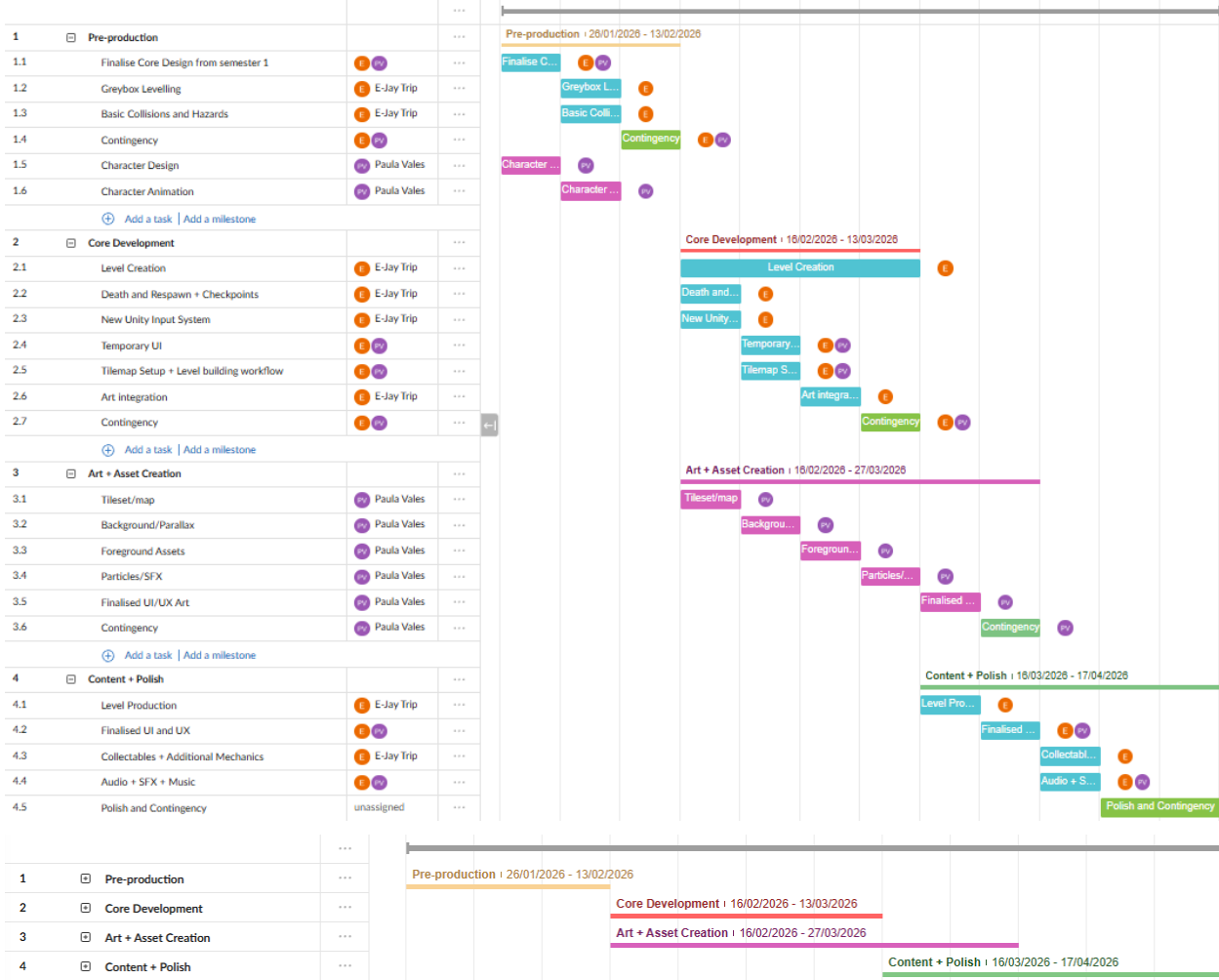
Software and Tools we will use:

- Unity → Main programming software
 - Trello → Project task management
 - (Tiled) - Tile mapping software
 - Miro → Visual collaboration
 - PureRef → Reference images
 - Procreate → Drafting art assets, concepts, and colour iterations
 - Clip Studio Paint → Finalised art assets, animation
 - Photoshop → Editing finalised art assets (if needed)
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- PC + Mouse and Keyboard, or controller
 - Headset

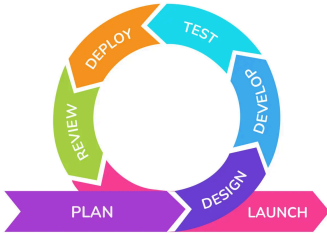
Project Structure

Project Structure

Our second semester starts on the 26th of January, for the first 3 weeks, we will be focusing on pre production work. Once the first phase is over, we will then move onto our production phase which will take up some of our easter break, but we intend to keep working. A few weeks before our deadline, we will polish our game to make sure quality is up to standard and that there aren't any bugs.



AGILE



Using Trello we created a kanban-style visual workflow management system, adding any tasks that need to be completed, providing each with priority. Then we can document when a specific task has been completed and by who. We will also achieve this using the AGILE methodology, essentially breaking down this large project into smaller chunks we can complete over shorter time-frames.

Presentation

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1lyM91nbdpgDok5X6kMI_7Qlo5ljyoeiNcQMUYoK9Q7E/edit?usp=sharing

Design Appendix

Design Appendix

Sound Design and Direction

Written By E-Jay

As we don't have a team member with specific skills to create an OST, the main sounds in our game would be foley sounds. Sounds like beach waves, ambient jungle sounds, ambient animal sounds etc. Different sounds will be playing at different scenes/areas in the game:

- The main island during the day (Set at a small village by a beach) will have waves and beach sounds
- Platforming sections in the denser, central parts of the island will have ambient jungle sounds etc.
- Astronavigation sections will have ambient night time/ night sky foley sounds etc.

However, we have curated a playlist with songs we could use as inspiration to create a potential OST:

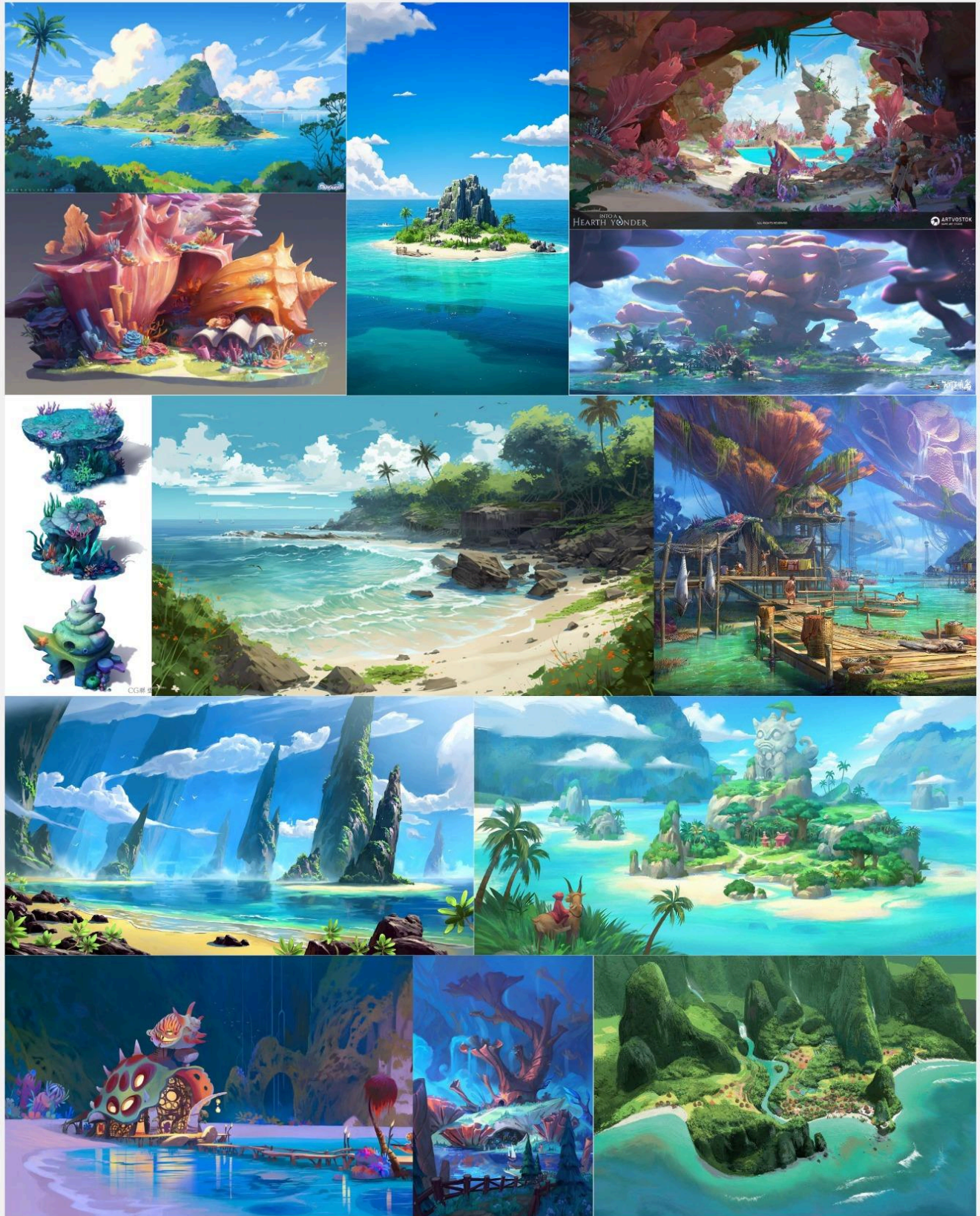
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6lqns6luTJMjqB6oTAfUzW?si=_4BgygMvSx-L7QBZEPgGDA&pi=4g2XPyhpTmqZu

Gameplay Prototypes

ADD VIDEO PROTOTYPES

Compiled by Paula

Island environment:



Player character



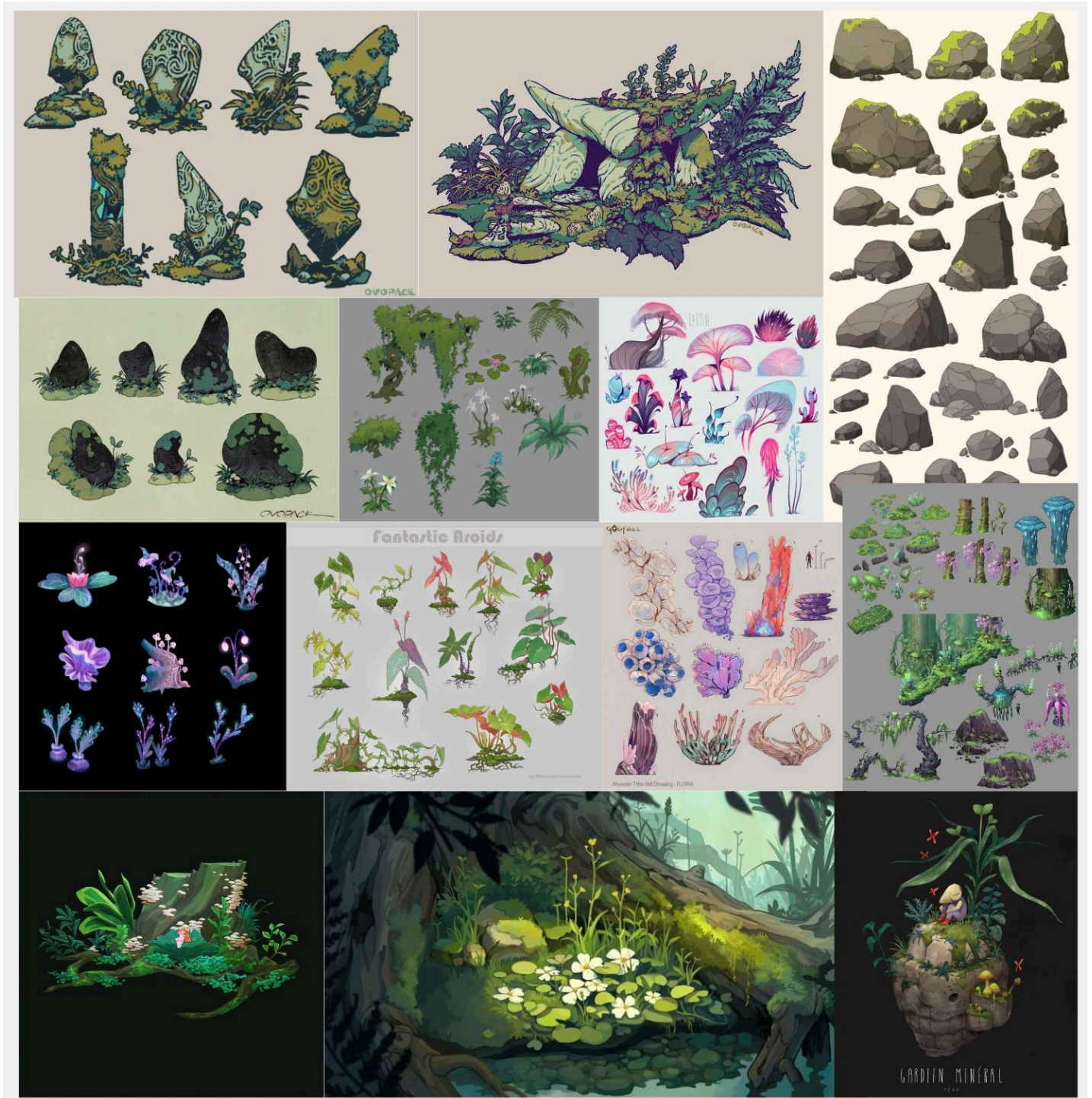
土人形の怪物
身体が土でできた大首の怪物。
宝物や大切な場所を守り続けている。



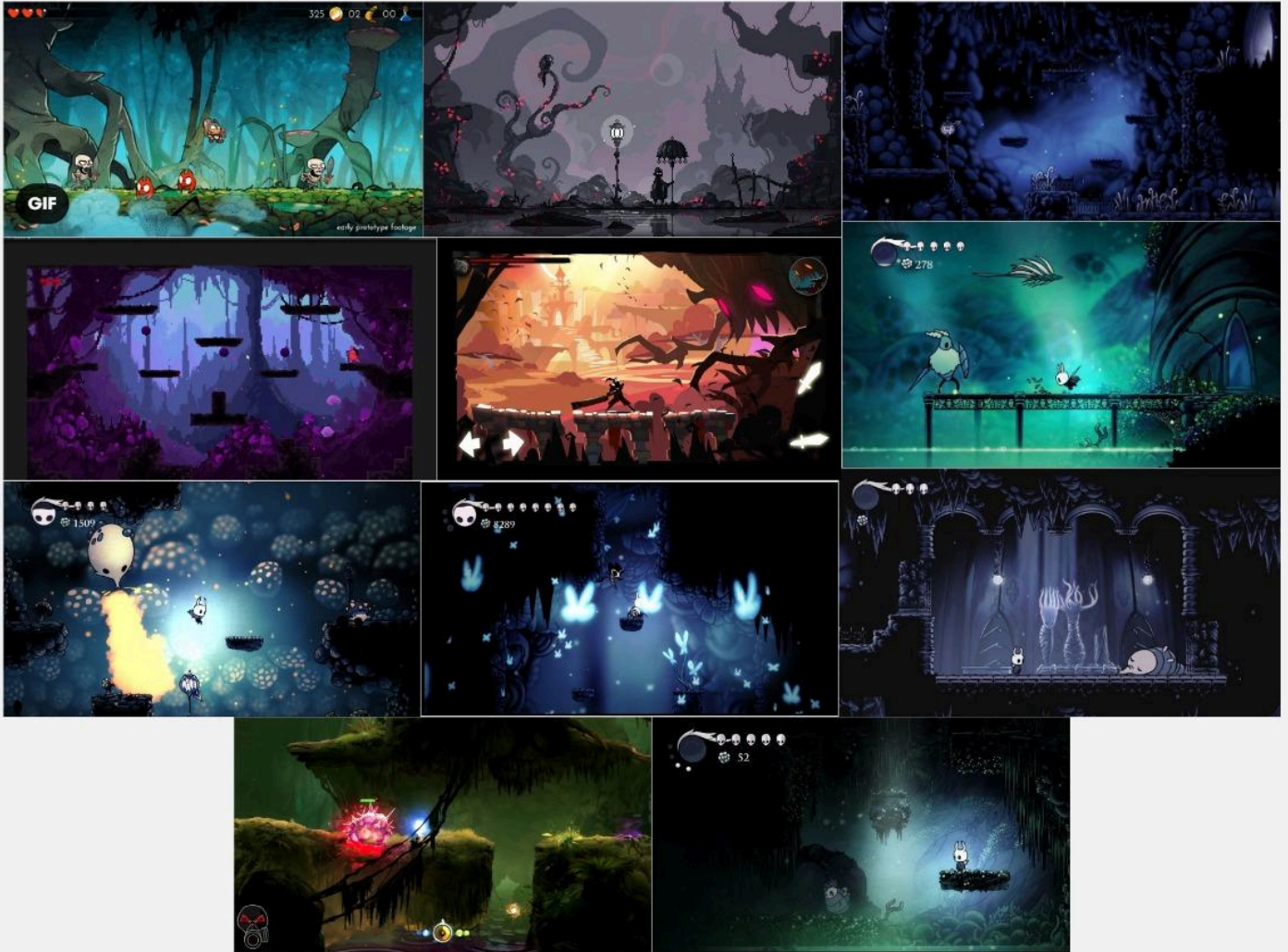
Town



Foreground + Background assets



Gameplay



Concept thumbnails of environment

