Development Project:

In the Face of the Sun

In the Face of the Sun (IFS) is a game designed with three major mechanics that comprise games: narrative presence, player agency, and game mechanics, in mind and is an attempt to use various art styles in the design process as an amplifier of each of the three elements, both to point out flaws in the game during its development, and as a way of highlighting the successes of each area.

Game genre:	Mixed - 2D and 3D platformer, JRPG, Visual novel
Platform:	PC

In the Face of the Sun is meant to be an experiment in the usage of different art styles in order to explore game design but is also an experience through which the player can explore multiple themes, such as triumph, dreams, loss, and ultimately, growth. IFS takes place in a fantastical world where it is always an overcast night and takes inspiration from games such as early Final Fantasy games, Ori and the Blind Forest, Hollow Night, and the visual novel format. The world is meant to be expansive, yet ultimately temporary, as the goal of the main character is to leave this world behind.

Characters

The characters in IFS are designed to take on the hand drawn style of Hollow Knight and are drawn in a rather small and cute art style for the majority of the game's primary navigation. The main character is Mira, a slightly anthropomorphic lizard, whose goal is to leave the world of night that she lives in. The central city that the player starts in is somewhat technologically advanced, but the world itself is a place where magic exists and is used by players and NPCs alike. As players navigate through the world, they will interact with NPCs, gain new powers, fight new enemies, and forge new bonds.

Mira has lived their entire life in this city, where things are convenient, and very few people leave. Her desire is to see the sun, and experience something new, but in doing so she will have to leave behind all that she knows.

Mira: 2D World Nav (left)
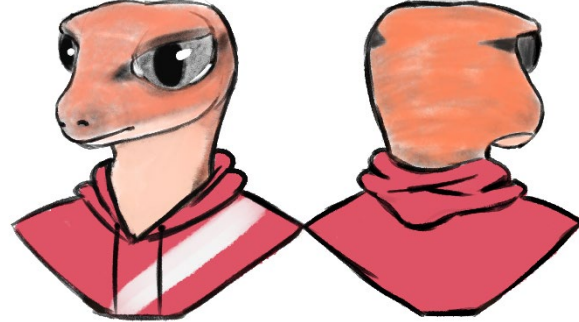
Mira: Visual Novel Style (right)

<u>Narrative Overview</u>

In a world of eternal night, things are not as bleak as they might seem. In the central city, the world is bustling and kind. Things are easy, and life, while loud is also quite sedentary. Very few people leave, and those who do often return. The world outside is old, and unexplored. The main story occurs when Mira, whose primary magic ability is to enter the dreams of others and comfort them, enters the dream of a dying village elder, whose last years have been spent in slumber. They dream of the dragons of old, and their final resting places, in three directions out from the city. Mira is inspired by this to leave the city, and to visit the dragons. As she meets them at the key points in her journey, she enters their dreams of a different world: a world with the sun. To reach each of these places she must explore the world to find boons left behind by older beings. Her final transformation is to become a dragon herself. However, to enter a world of sun, she is forced to leave those boons behind. It is then revealed that this new world is a world of both: of day with a sun, and night with a sky full of stars.

<u>Mechanics</u>

As the player enters the dreams of the dragons, the mechanics and art styles shift to bring to light how things used to be in this world, shifting between an extension of the 2D system already implemented, a JRPG-top-down style of movement and combat, and a visual novel. In both dream levels where the style shifts occur and in the 2d world, there will be an emphasis on making character decisions permanent, in that choices to go to one area and not another, to solve puzzles in a certain way, or to interact with characters in a particular way will open or close parts of the world permanently.

Environment

With the exception of the 3d platformer level designs, the majority of this game will be in a 2d setting.

3D levels will take inspiration from the navigation of games like Mario Odyssey, Banjo and Kazooie, and Crash Bandicoot.

In each new environment, the 2D levels stay the same, but in the dream levels, the altered art style and primary game mechanic of each level should serve to modify the point rating of the different elements explained in my research project. Each dream level should serve to introduce something new into the story, but also alter how the player interacts with the game, as we focus on different sets of design elements in each level. For example one of the dream levels would use the visual novel format which will increase the rating associated with both player agency and narrative presence but would naturally require less mechanical skill. The art style would support the change in gameplay by visualizing the very different foal behind dream versus real-world setting levels and be done in an appropriate style. The choices players will make will also result in changes in the character's image as shown below, showing Mira's evolution.

Mira (fire boon)   Mira (air boon)

UI/UX

The 2 main menus open with different methods. They map will be overlaid with some transparency on the level the player is currently on. The player ability and inventory menu will temporarily take over the screen when clicked on. There is a constant UI at the bottom right to show the player which character abilities they can use, and how much health they have left.

Wireframe
Mockup

Primary Abilities
Cooldown/Charge

Health bubbles

double
jump