



EKHO

A NYMPH'S TALE

Game Design Document
V2.1



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

● Introduction/Abstract	p.2
● Overview	p. 3
○ Audience & Context	
○ Motivation	
○ Core Gameplay	
○ Primary Goal	
● Gameplay	p. 6
○ Unique mechanics	
○ Gameplay Examples	
○ Controls	
○ Rules & Objectives	
○ Etc.	
● Levels & Locations	p. 10
● User Interface	p. 11
○ Shell	
○ Pause Menu	
○ HUD	
● Audio	p. 13
○ Music	
○ Sound Effects	
● Playtest Results	p. 14
● Current State(s) of Game	p. 15
○ Screenshots (with captions)	
● Future Plans	p. 18
● Conclusion	p. 18
● pressKit()	p. 19
● Team & Repeating Collaborators	p.
26	

INTRODUCTION & ABSTRACT

Play as a shape-shifting elemental heroine and use the environment to your advantage against enemies and obstacles in this 2D side-scrolling adventure.



Ekho is a 2D side-scrolling puzzle adventure in which the player's ability to change their elemental form plays a key role in defeating enemies and overcoming obstacles. Rather than picking up powerups and weapons, the player comes equipped with the skill to absorb elemental abilities from enemies by blocking their attacks. Those absorbed abilities must then be used logically to overcome environmental hazards in order to progress through the game.

* * *

OVERVIEW

Audience & Context

Ekho will appeal to a wide range of audiences across all ages and social groups. Featuring a female lead, the game will utilize colorful and whimsical imagery to convey a classic narrative arc of good versus evil set against a mythological fantasy backdrop.



*“Sweetest Ekho, sweetest nymph, that liv’st unseen
Within thy airy shell, By slow Meander’s margent
green, and in the violet-embroidered vale.”*

- John Milton

Motivation

Play as the shapeshifting nymph Ekho in a mythological fantasy setting. In a world where the magic of nature maintains balance between the elements, a darkness emerges that threatens disruption and upheaval. It is up to the player to use the natural power of the elements to defeat enemies and seek out the source of the darkness that spreads in the form of corrupted elemental creatures- messengers of the vengeful goddess queen Hera.



DIONYSUS

Ekho,

See the corrupted elementals that have poisoned my green pastures with their vile pestilence. They are messengers of the goddess queen Hera.

She has been angered, and must be dealt with if these foul beasts are to be cleared from my temples and vineyards.

Seek out Narcissus- you will find him near a pool in the foothills of Mount Pelion. His cooperation will be crucial in helping you confront Hera so that her rage may be pacified.... for now.

Core Gameplay

- Block enemy attacks
- Absorb elemental power
- Change form
- Attack enemies using various elemental abilities
- Manage your usage charges
- Plan movesets logically according to environmental obstacles
- Progress through levels
- Encounter and defeat Hera

Primary Goal

Avoid enemy damage and progress through increasingly difficult levels and environments toward the end level where you will ultimately encounter and defeat the vengeful goddess queen Hera.



GAMEPLAY

Unique Mechanics

The primary mechanic at the core of *Ekho* gameplay is the “absorb and shift” mechanic, which allows the player to take on a new set of elemental abilities by blocking an enemy attack. These alternate elemental abilities last for a set number of charges, after which the player reverts back to neutral abilities (absorb/heal). Having a set number of charges leaves the player having to plan when and where to use their abilities to get around enemies and obstacles, or else have to backtrack to regain the element and restart the puzzle.

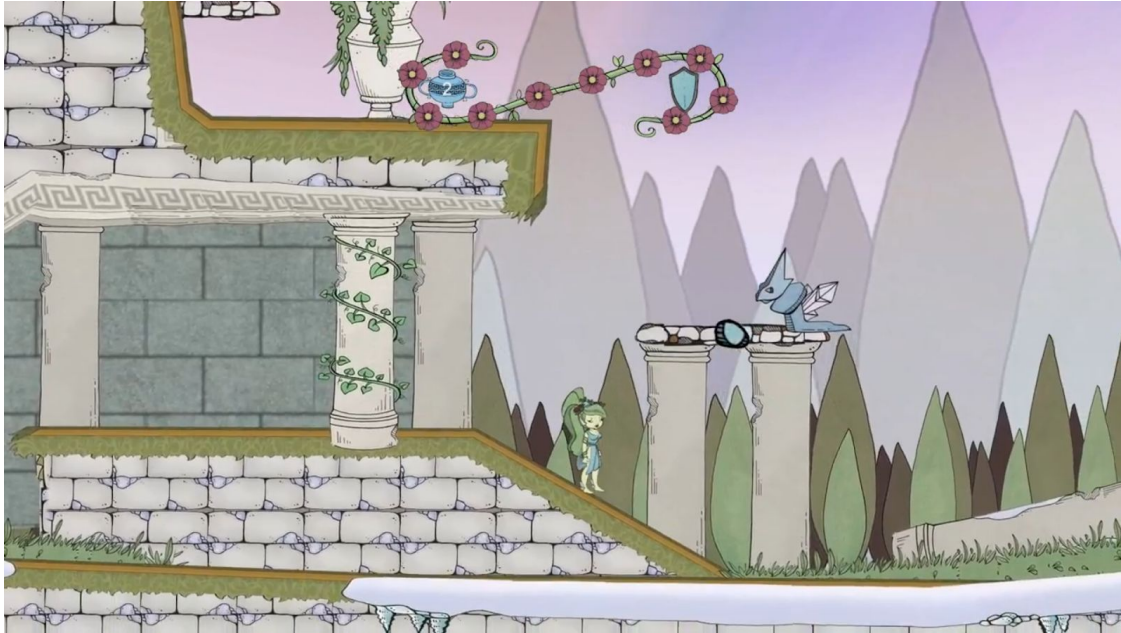
- **Ice Element**
 - *Ice lance*- the player can generate and throw icicles which adhere to walls and become climbable platforms that fade away after a limited time. Lances can also damage enemies.
 - *Ice Block*- the player can produce a large block of ice that can be pushed around or used as a platform.
- **Fire Element** (Note: not featured in vertical slice)
 - *Dash*- moves the player once in any direction, while also dealing fire damage to enemies within its range.
 - *Fireball*- tosses fireballs away from the player in a ballistic arc, dealing fire damage to enemies it collides with.
- **Earth Element**
 - *Leaf Strike* - the player can generate a burst of leaves that produce damage in a small area in front of them.
 - *Vine swing*- the player can shoot out a swinging vine that serves as a grappling hook.

Health System

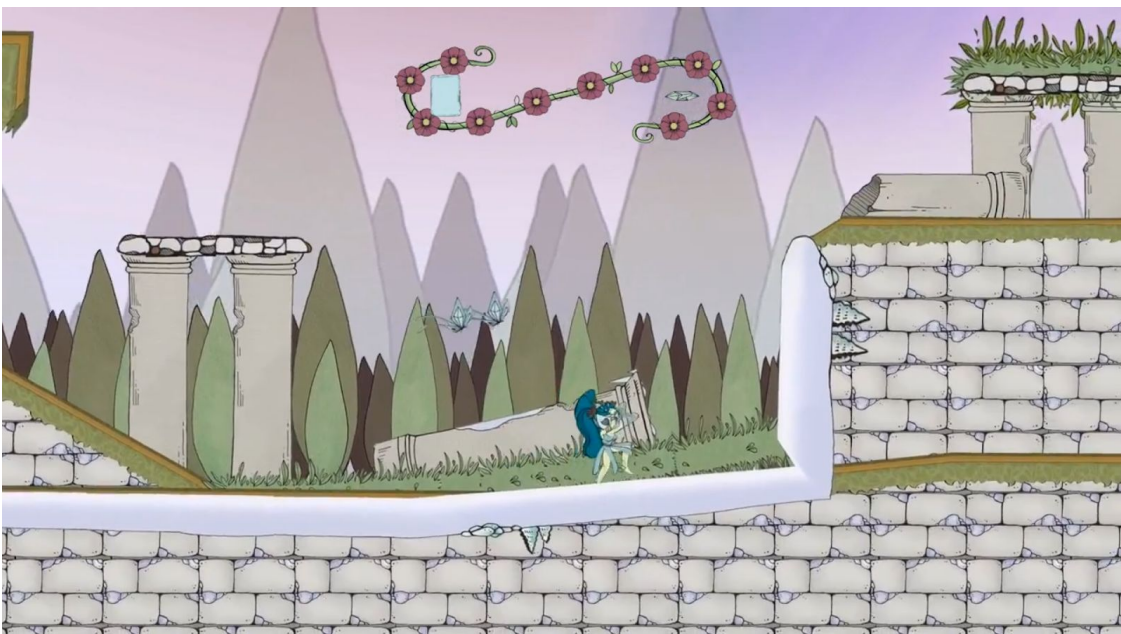
The player can break pots to gather charges that can be used to regenerate lost health when in neutral form.

Gameplay Examples

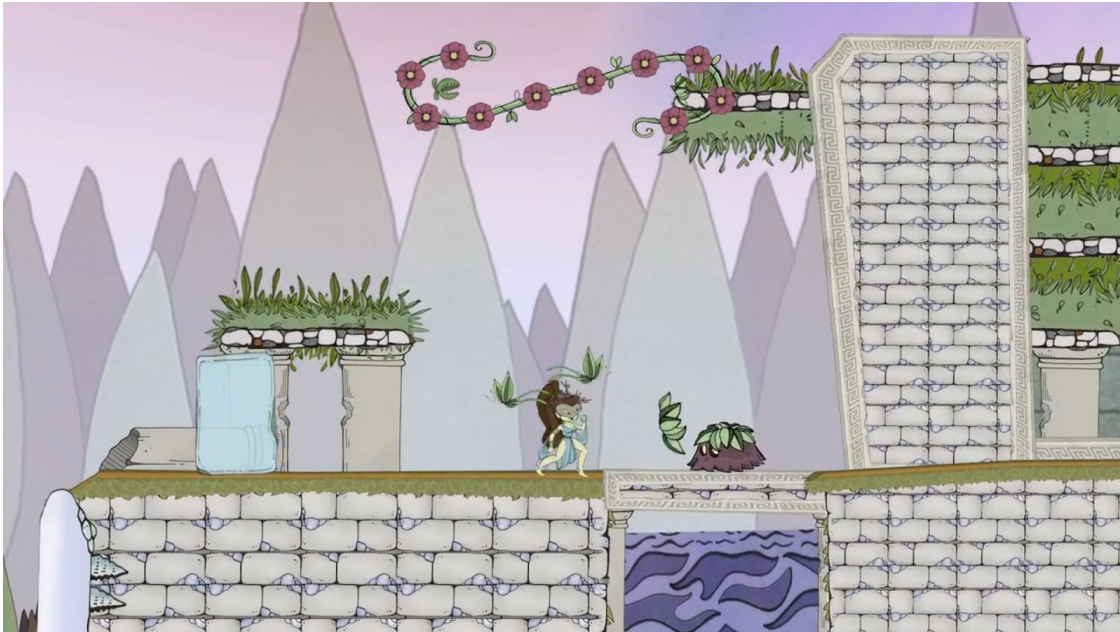
Much of *Ekho*'s gameplay revolves around handling enemy attacks and using abilities to navigate the environment. In this example, the player uses two different abilities to work their way up and across the level.



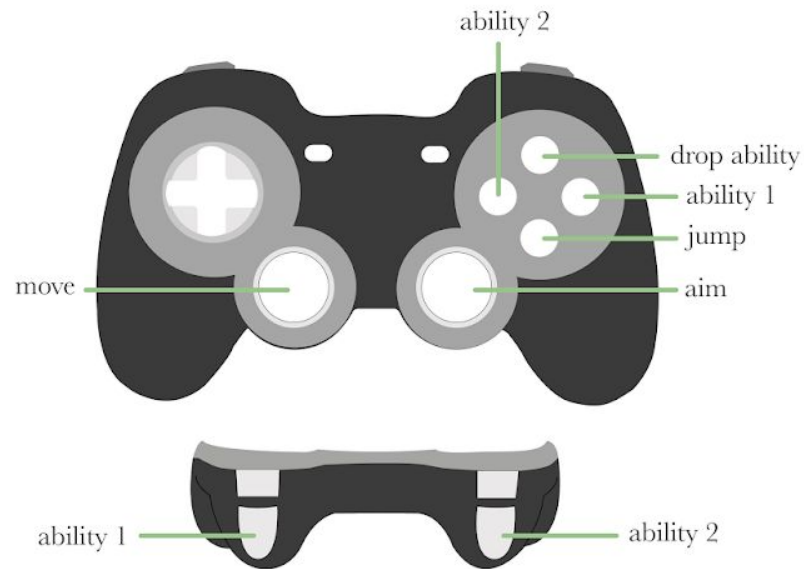
To begin, the player comes across an ice enemy firing snowballs at them. They can absorb the abilities from that projectile and move forward to the wall ahead of where they can fire *ice lances* to create platforms to climb on.



Once the player is at the top of the platform, they come across an earth enemy. They can then absorb an attack from the earth enemy to take on earth elemental abilities. In earth elemental form, they can use *leaf strike* to defeat the enemy then use the *vine swing* to grapple up to the platform above.



Controls



XBox Controller (Recommended)

Left Stick - Move

Right Stick - Aim (Vine Grapple)

Right Trigger / B - Absorb/ Elemental Attack Ability

Left Trigger / X - Elemental Utility Ability

A - Jump

Y - Drop Ability

Start - Pause

Mouse and Keyboard

WASD - Move

Space - Jump

Right Click - Absorb/ Elemental Attack Ability

Left Click - Elemental Utility Ability

Mouse Cursor - Aim (Vine Grapple)

Shift - Drop Ability

Esc - Pause

Rules & Objectives

The core loop of this game is built on completing levels and defeating bosses. Rules that limit the player character are as follows:

- Keep health above 0 HP
- Stay within bounds of level (e.g. falling off platforms will result in penalties)
- Limit of three charges whenever player absorbs an ability
 - This can be modified later on with character upgrades (TBD)
- Defeat the boss at the end of each level before the level can be counted as complete

Objectives for the player are as follows:

- Use abilities to navigate through level environments
- Defeat the boss at the end of each level

LEVELS & LOCATIONS

Each level features anywhere from one elemental skill to any combination of the three currently available elemental skills for players to utilize for navigational and combat purposes. This means that there are some levels that will strictly be ice-themed while others can feature a combination of fire and earth or earth and ice, etc.

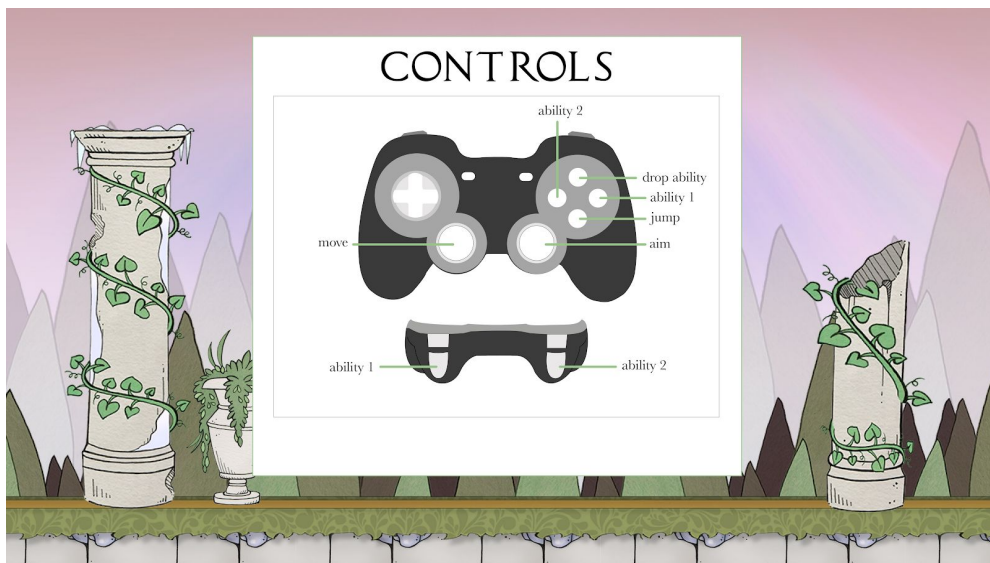
For the vertical slice, the level features ice and earth elements. The level is especially designed with the utility skills (ice block and vine grapple) in mind, therefore creating an environment with hills and steep surfaces for players to climb on, grapple to, or ride ice blocks down in order to navigate their way to the boss.

In determining locations for levels to be set in, the mythological context of the game is key. While the vertical slice is set in a more generic location on Earth, other locations for considering include:

- Mount Olympus
- Pangaea (where the Greek Gods fought the Titans)
- Nysa (where Dionysus was raised)
- Ithaca (the home of Odysseus)
- Mount Pelion (home to Ekho, where Narcissus can be found)

USER INTERFACE

The overall design of the main menus were centered around building a nature-esque, pastoral scene with art assets also used in the playable level itself. The buttons were designed to have a drop-shadow when the cursor (or control stick) hovers over that option. There are four options to choose from: start the game, display information about the development team, look at the controls, or exit the game entirely. The controls diagram is meant to refer to the button assignments in a visual way, without relying on the names of buttons themselves (such as A, X, Right Trigger, etc.)



The primary visible UI element during gameplay is the curved health “bar” in the top-middle of the screen; the visual style itself is inspired by a vine with flowers growing off of it. The flowers represent the player’s health at any given time; flowers in full bloom indicate full health, which will shrink back into a bud as the player takes damage (and re-bloom upon regaining health). The flowers turn back into a bud one at a time, starting with the farthest right flower. Each flower represents a different threshold of health remaining (similar to a health bar).

Two icons are displayed in the negative space within the curved ends of the bar: these reflect the two abilities that the player is equipped with at any given time, depending on what power Ekho is currently holding. These icons change whenever Ekho gains a new elemental power, and each icon will glow when in use.

Lastly, whenever Ekho possesses an elemental power, three butterflies will spawn around her. These represent the amount of “ammunition” that the player has for using elemental powers. When using an ability once, one of the butterflies will disappear. When all three butterflies have been exhausted, Ekho will revert back into her base form. The goal when designing this UI element was to have it integrated into the environment of the game itself, rather than staying in one place on the screen at all times.



AUDIO

There are two main tracks composed for the game by Aaron Talabucon:

Track Title	Usage
Butterflux Studios Tune 1	Main Menu Music
The Snorkeler's Apprentice	Gameplay Music

Additional sound effects used in the game:

Type	Sound Effect Purpose	Source	Notes
Movement	Jump	freesound.org	<i>Hup</i> sound, 1 sample
Movement	Walk/Run (Grass)	freesound.org	3 different samples
Movement	Walk/Run (Snow)	freesound.org	3 different samples
Attack	Lance/Snowball Throw	soundbible.com	1 sample
Attack	Snowball (ice enemy)	soundbible.com	<i>Splat</i> sound, 1 sample
Environmental	Pottery Breakage v1	freesound.org	<i>Shatter</i> sound, 2 samples
Environmental	Pottery Breakage v2	freesound.org	<i>Shatter</i> sound, 2 samples
Boss	Hydra Roar	freesound.org	Loud <i>Roar</i> sound, 1 sample

PLAYTEST RESULTS

Alpha Playtest

The alpha playtest was met with intrigue by playtesters, but there were plenty of critiques to be had for the mechanics that were featured in this playtest. Here are a few of the critiques made by playtesters:

- The homing capacity of enemy projectiles made the game too hard
- The icicle ability didn't feel intuitive yet
- The player character was a little too slippery in the environment
- Projectiles could sometimes knock the player character into the architecture of the level
 - Note: players actually found this bug entertaining
- The platforming felt similar to old-school platformers

Beta Playtest

With more of the artwork and mechanics solid and in place, reviewers had a better taste of what the final game would look like with the Beta playtest. While there were some critiques about the level environment and mechanics, the overall reception was generally positive. Here are some summaries of the comments made by playtesters:

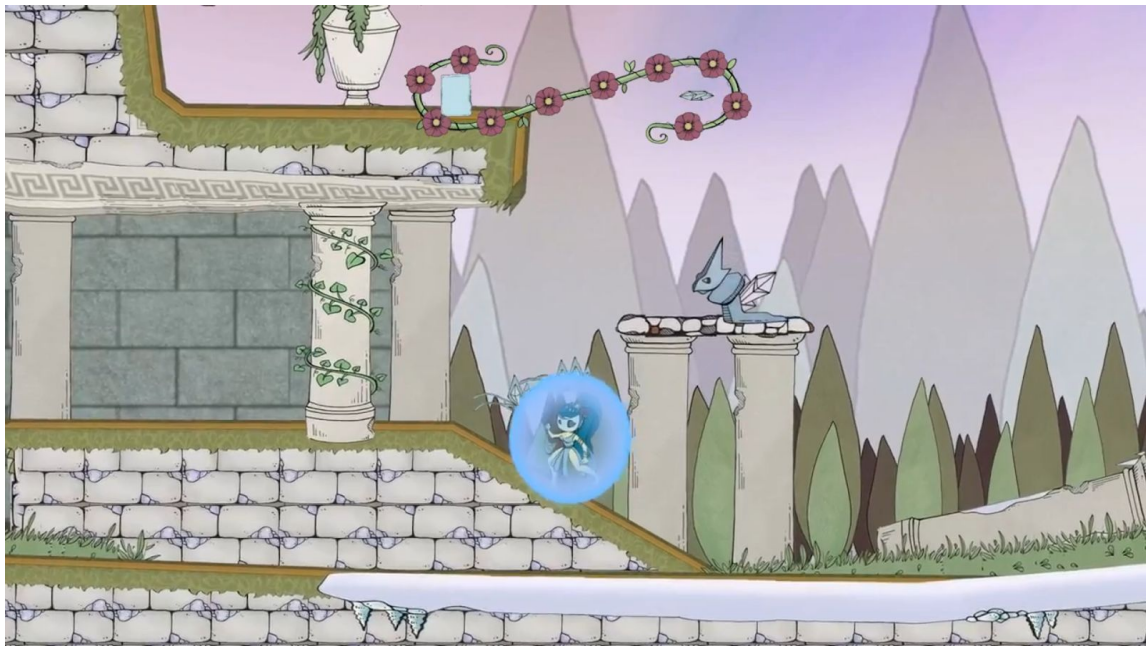
- Felt like they were learning and progressing after each death
- Enemies needed more interactivity beyond spamming the shield button
- Healing was overpowered
- Player friction felt off - too floaty
- While it was a little anxiety-inducing to use the grappling ability because the player was stuck in place for a moment with incoming projectiles, they were not discouraged from using it because of the ability's overall utility
- They really wanted to break the pots
 - Note - this was added in the final version
- Players felt accomplished after they completed the level

CURRENT STATE OF GAME

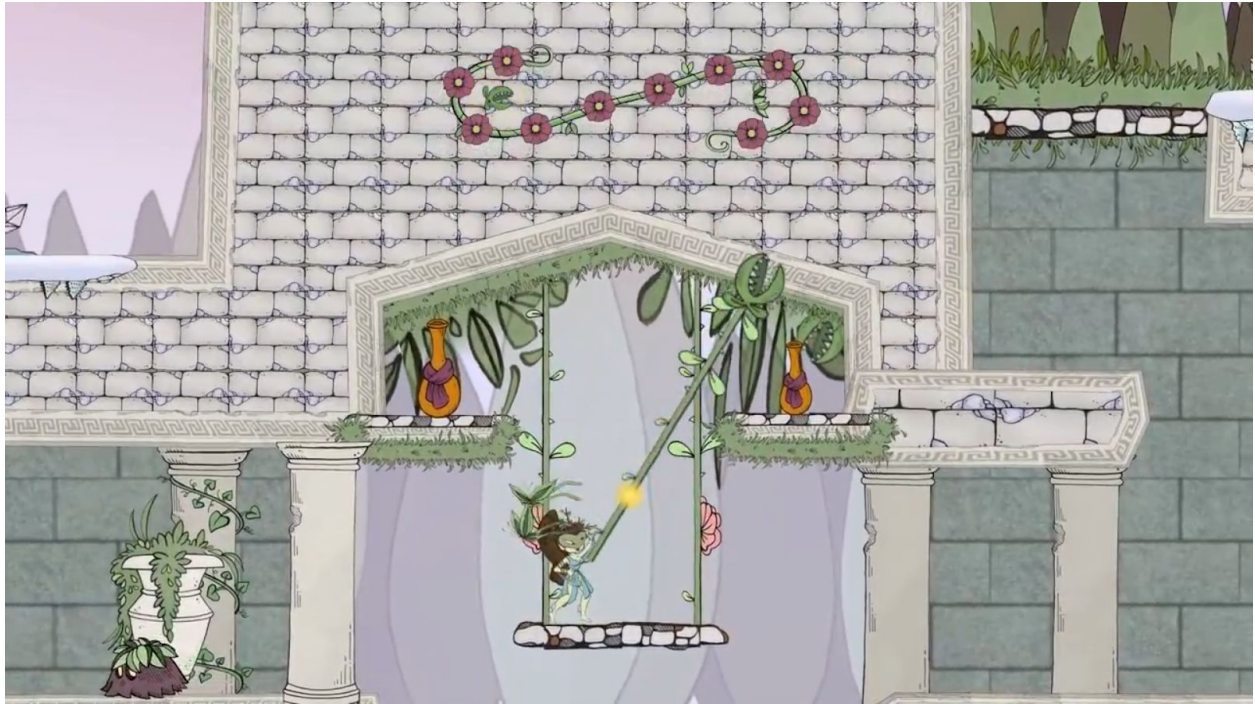
As it stands now, *Ekho* only has one level for the vertical slice. This includes the full level plus the boss fight at the end, along with all menu functionality (pause menu, about screen, exit).



Near start of level, Ekho riding an ice block down a slope.



Ekho absorbing an attack and turning into ice elemental form.



Ekho using vine swing to grapple up to a higher platform.



Ekho using ice lance to climb to higher platforms.



Ekho fighting the level boss.



Ekho after defeating the level boss.

FUTURE PLANS

While no solid plans have been made for *Ekho* beyond the vertical slice, we do have some options for where to take the game in the future. The biggest option under our consideration is submission to IndieCade 2018. It is possible for us to submit the vertical slice and receive feedback on it, but no formal decision has been made on this subject at this time. We also have the option of continuing development on our own without submission to IndieCade, but that decision has not been made at this time, either.

CONCLUSION

Ekho has proven to be a valuable learning experience to all members of the Butterflux Studios team. From start to finish, this project has been a labor of love and the end result shows how much we are capable of with just a few months of work. Through all its ups and downs, *Ekho* is a game to be proud of, and one that will stand as a strong demonstration of what this team is capable of achieving.

PRESSKIT

Factsheet

Developer

Butterflux Studios

Based in Moorpark, CA

Founding Date

10 January, 2018

Website

<https://butterfluxstudios.wordpress.com/>

Press/ Business Contact

butterflux.studios@gmail.com

Social

<https://twitter.com/ButterfluxGames>

Releases

[Ekho](#)

Description

Butterflux Studios is a small team of students in the Moorpark College Game Design program.

History

Each of Butterflux's members come from the Moorpark College Game Design program and all have experience creating small games from 2-D platformers to 3-D adventures. They came together in January for the studio course in the program where they developed *Ekho*, a Greek-themed 2-D adventure platformer.

Previous Games from the Butterflux Team

Panic in the Clouds (Jenna Anderson) - a 2-D platformer about an angel making her way through the clouds.

Evernite (Victoria Marble) - a 2-D platformer about Tetra, a geometric character trapped in a cosmic world of eternal light.

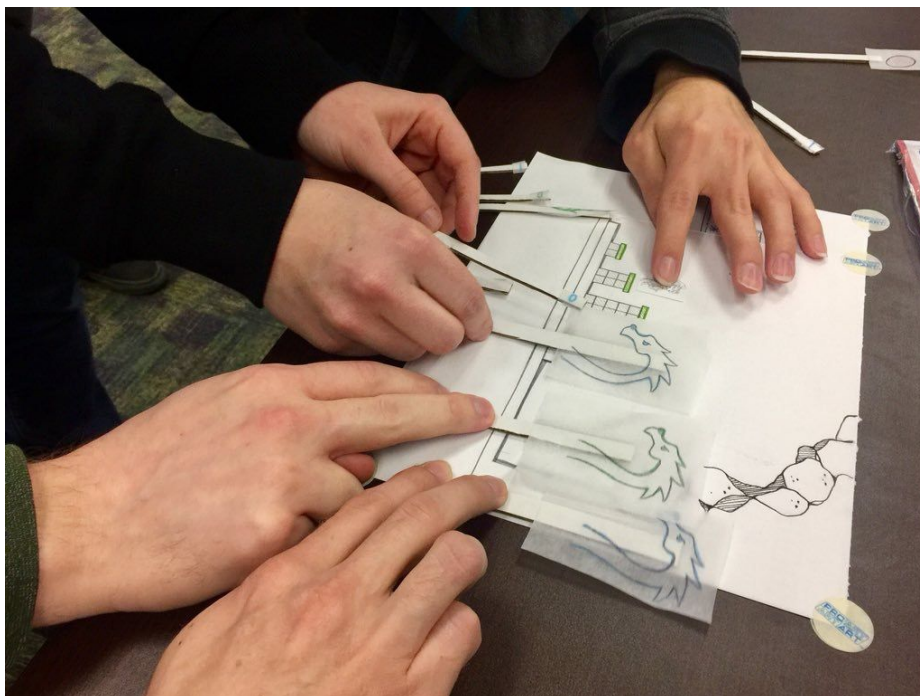
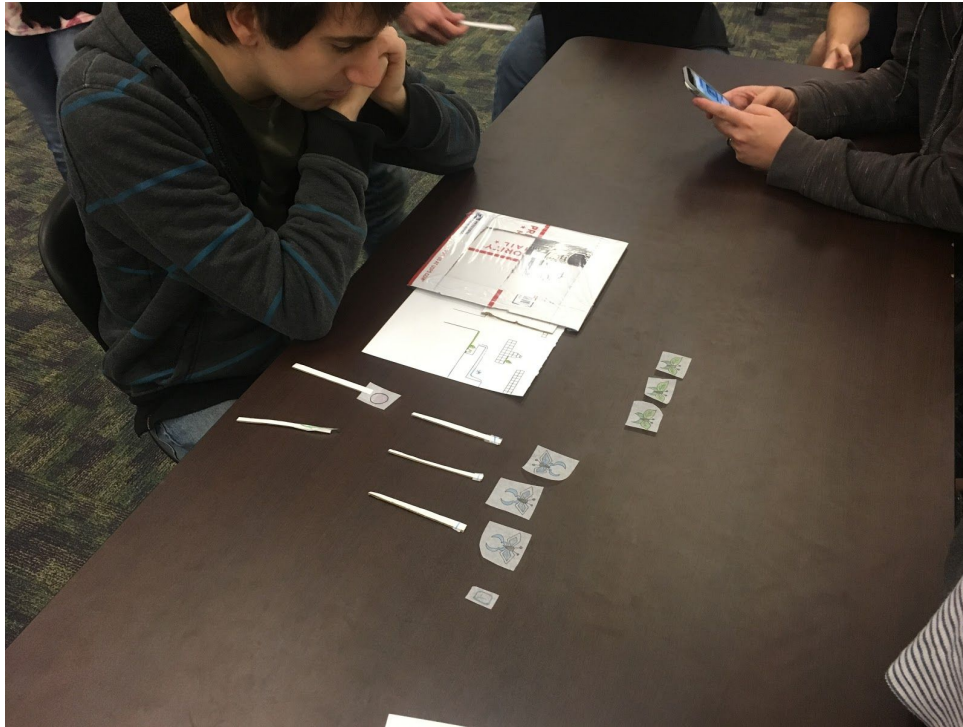
Glassketball (Chris Kissler) - a first-person, physics-based puzzle game where the color of a ball dictates the surfaces it can pass through.

Warmhearted (Amanda Baker) - a 2-D platformer about a girl trying to restore warmth to her frozen world.

Mischievous Night (Eric Marble) - a 3-D Halloween-themed walking simulator with puzzle elements.

Images









Logo and Icon



Team & Repeating Collaborators

Eric Marble

Producer, Animator

Chris Kissler

Programmer

Victoria Marble

Lead Artist

Jenna Anderson

Graphic Designer, Concept Artist

Amanda Baker

Social Media Manager, Audio Designer

Aaron Talabucon

Composer

Tim Samoff and John Bair

Executive Producers