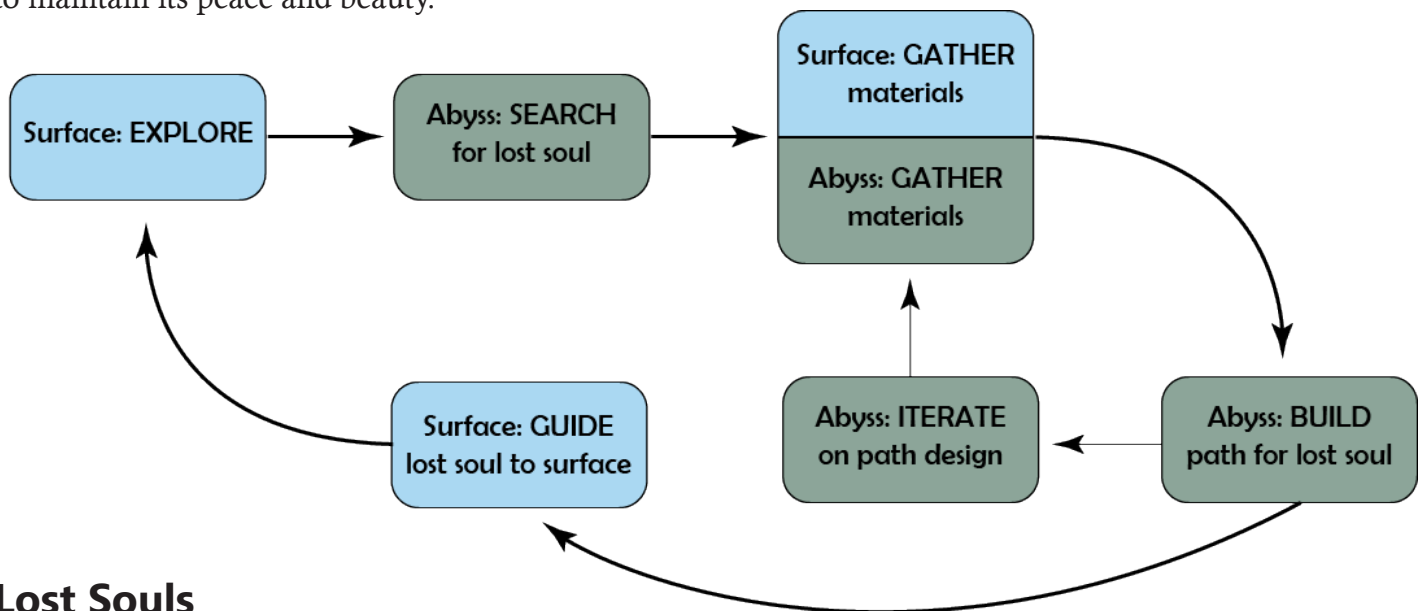


The Spirit of Serenity

Gameplay

The Spirit of Serenity is a game about what the afterlife might be like. In it, the player (who has just died) will need to balance their longing to stay in the peaceful village of Serenity with their desire to help lost souls who are trapped in the abyss at the center of the village. The player will **explore** the surface of the world and **collect** materials that they can use to **build** paths to guide lost souls out of the abyss. To do so, the player will need to observe and learn about the lost souls they find to figure out what sort of path would lead them to the village of Serenity. Lastly, Serenity is made up of only so many blocks to collect, so the player will have to be aware of the impact they have on the village when gathering materials in order to maintain its peace and beauty.



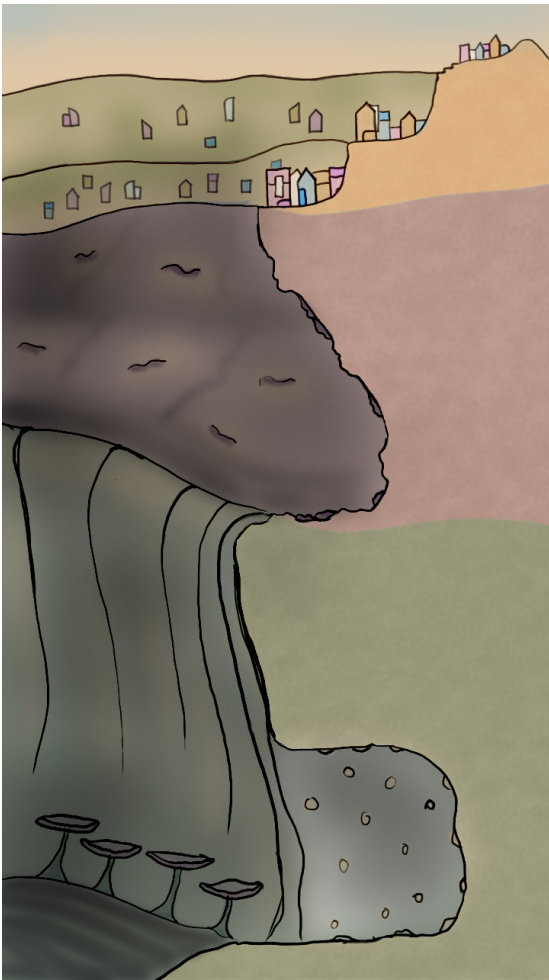
Lost Souls

While exploring the abyss, you'll come across **lost souls in need of your help** as a guide to Serenity, where they too can finally be at peace. Each spirit has **a variety of attributes that determine its behavior**. For example being attracted to a certain colors, frightened by a certain shapes, and distracted by certain items in the abyss. These would be layered with each other meaning that a lost soul might be more attracted to blue than they are afraid cubes for instance. The player will need to spend time **observing and getting to know each lost soul** they come across in order to figure out what kind of path they can build to help the Lost Soul to the surface. As they journey together, the player will need to adjust their strategy for path building as they come across new obstacles in the abyss. A key goal for development is to have three of these characters developed with the option to do more if we have the opportunity to expand the scope.

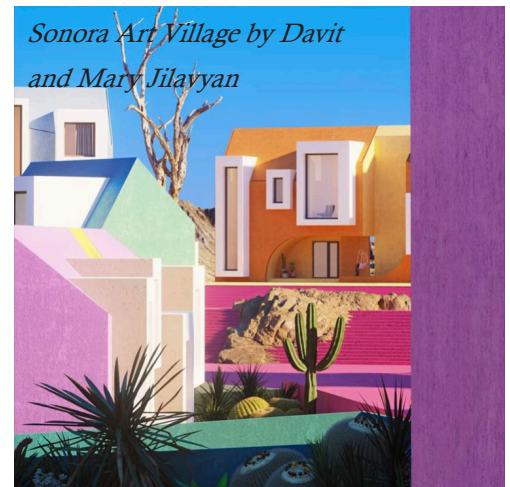


Lost Soul design by Vikki Brown

World Design and Lore



At the surface of this world is the village of Serenity which is where the souls of people who have died come to rest. To get there, **souls must first journey up through the abyss**. Some, like the player character have movement abilities that allow them to get to the surface on their own, but most do not. Since **every soul has a different movement pattern**, their struggle through the abyss is unique. For the initial release of the game, the goal is to have two layers of the abyss developed, with **each layer having distinct features**. For instance the first layer below the surface might have rocky textures that the player needs to help souls navigate while the second layer might have large pieces of nature that create a sort of maze that needs to be navigated.



Production

Key Goals for production include the following:

- 3 fully developed **Lost Soul characters** with unique movement patterns (about 10-15 minutes to guide each Lost Soul to the surface)
- The **village of Serenity** fully designed (should take 5-10 minutes to walk around)
- Two layers of the **abyss** each with at least a few distinct characteristics
- Fully developed **building and collection system** with 6 different block types and colors
- A **tutorial** that walks the player through their own journey out of the abyss by teaching them how to use their character controller
- 4 **narrative** beats: one for the tutorial and another one for each of the lost soul characters

During pre-production we will focus on developing one Lost Soul character with AI, art, and animation to get an idea for how to make the characters interesting and engaging as well as how long it might take for each character. We will also need about 25% of the village to be designed and built as well as the first layer of the abyss. The collection and building system should be working although it may need further adjustments in production. The tutorial and the narrative should be planned, although they may not be fully implemented yet. Stretch goals mostly involve expanding the world and depending on what we discover during pre-production, we can discuss which parts of the worlds to prioritize building further whether that means more lost souls, more layers of the abyss, or something else.

FAQ

What are the guiding principles?

- Provide tasks with multiple solutions; allow for varying play styles
- Create tension between staying at peace and helping others; either way the player is making a sacrifice
- Exploring and creative expression in the village of Serenity is as fun as solving puzzles

Why are there so few souls in the game?

The practical reason is scope. Having a few carefully crafted Lost Souls can be more narratively impactful than many less thoughtful characters. That being said, this is something we will need to explore carefully during pre-production. Some thoughts on this include figuring out if it is possible to randomly generate a population of lost souls to help fill the abyss as well as the village. If this ended up being a successful direction, it would still be important to have some specially crafted characters that have special meaning to the player. What we discover in terms of how much we can fill the world with souls will also impact lore. In a scenario where there are only 3 Lost Souls and the player, I imagine this as the player's personal afterlife where they find peace and comfort with only few other souls who they have a connection to.

Why is there a limited number of blocks to use as building resources?

This is to help create the tension between the abyss and the village. With a limited number of resources, there is a cost the player has to consider when venturing into the abyss to help the Lost Souls. They need to be conscious of the impact of their decisions. This also contributes to the progression of challenge in the game. The first soul to help is relatively easy since the player has all of the resources available. With each new soul to help, resources become more scarce and the player has to also consider the souls they have already guided to the surface and maintaining the village as peaceful place that was worth being guided to.

How does the player know when they have taken too many blocks from Serenity?

This is something that would need to be explored further in pre-production, but I do have an idea for an energy system that is based on how many blocks are in Serenity at any given time. This would help represent the idea that when in the village of Serenity, the player (and other souls) are at peace and rejuvenated, but when they venture into the abyss they have an energy meter that starts to deplete. The further into the abyss they go, the faster this meter depletes making it more dangerous and difficult to help Lost Souls in lower layers. The energy comes from the blocks themselves so bringing blocks to the abyss helps slow this process, but the fog of the abyss makes them less effective. With each block that is collected from Serenity by the player, the village becomes a less rejuvenating place for both the player and the other souls they have brought there which is why the player needs to manage their resources carefully and creatively.

Does the game have an end?

Sort of... Once the player has guided the three Lost Souls to the surface, there won't be any more narrative to discover. With that said, the player can still enjoy sandboxing in the village of Serenity by taking apart buildings and rebuilding them in their own way as much as they want. We would also

have the option to release patches that could add more characters and layers of the abyss after the initial release, and in that sense, it has the potential to be endless.

What will the character controller be like?

This is something else that will need to be explored in pre-production, but the player should be able to move pretty freely including potentially flying. It should make sense that their movement abilities allowed them to journey out of the abyss without a path being built for them. That being said, I think there could be interesting opportunities with tying the character controller and abilities to the energy system mentioned above to create more challenge for the player especially as they venture deeper into the abyss.

What is the current state of the prototype?

The prototype was built in Unreal and has a basic building and collection system that works for cube shapes. Other block shapes can be used with system and have some ability to be rotated while placed but don't have rules yet for what happens if you try to place a cube shape on the sloped surface of a wedge for instance. There is also a basic inventory system set up so that when you collect blocks, they get added to your inventory, when you place blocks, they are subtracted from your inventory, and you can't build if your inventory is empty. Lastly, there is a simple AI spirit that can follow a path of blue cubes. When it is in its wandering state and there is a blue cube within a certain radius, it will run to the blue cube. At this point it looks to see if there is another blue cube next to the current one and then moves to that. If there are no more blue blocks, it starts wandering again. Both the build system and the AI have a couple bugs, but function for the most part. It took me about a week to get it to this state.

What tools will you use?

- Unreal
- Maya
- Substance Painter
- Jira
- Perforce



**Who will you find
in the abyss?**