EL ABUELO

UNFOLDED MEMORIES

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT



01 / VISION

A lifetime to unfold

A narrative Metroidvania about memory, imagination and the stories we leave behind.

HIGH CONCEPT

An isolated boy meets an elderly traveler living alone above his village. Through the old man’s stories and a collection of paper origami, the boy explores interconnected worlds shaped by fading recollections and his own imagination. He restores fragments of a lifetime while discovering a world beyond the one he has always known.

THE CENTRAL PROMISE

Explore extraordinary memories, fold paper into meaningful abilities, and preserve the stories of a life before they fade.

EXPERIENCE TARGET

Exploration-driven platforming, environmental puzzles and moments of expressive traversal. The intended pacing sits between the contemplative puzzle design of Planet of Lana and the flowing exploration of Ori, without the execution demands of a combat-focused Metroidvania.

THREE DESIGN PILLARS

EXPLORE	Navigate a continuous world of interconnected memories, shortcuts, secrets and revisitable paths.
FOLD	Use intuitive origami properties to experiment, traverse and solve environmental problems.
REMEMBER	Recover essential memories, resolve their distortions and protect a lifetime from oblivion.

02 / NARRATIVE

Two lives, one legacy

A boy who has yet to discover the world meets a man beginning to forget it.

THE BOY

A 10–12-year-old Afro-Hispanic boy living in a fictional village inspired by the Caribbean and Latin America. His father died when he was young; his alcoholic mother is emotionally unavailable. He knows other children but remains profoundly alone.

EL ABUELO

An elderly Hispanic traveler living in a secluded house on the hill. He has experienced a vast world, but age has begun to erode the details of his memories. His origami collection carries traces of the people and places he has known.

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

At the river, a mysterious large-eared animal plays with the children. When the others return home, the boy follows it toward the hill. The animal leads him to El Abuelo’s house; it is the old man’s companion.

THE ENDING

El Abuelo dies regardless of completion. Memory Keys preserve stories, but do not cure his memory loss. The boy's notebook preserves what he learns; as an adult, he passes El Abuelo's stories on to others.

NARRATIVE CONTRAST

The boy has a future he cannot yet imagine. El Abuelo has a past he struggles to remember. Their friendship changes both.

03 / WORLD

A connected world of memories

The house is the anchor; associative memory, not geography, connects the biomes.

TWO VERSIONS OF THE HOUSE

In the real world, the house is a narrative HUB. Conversations with El Abuelo open access to his memories; the house also appears inside the Memory World, allowing the boy to travel between the two. As their bond deepens, new rooms and damaged origami are discovered.

REAL HOUSE

Conversation / discoveries

↔

MEMORY HOUSE

World anchor / return

GIANT GARDEN

Childhood / scale

ENDLESS RAILWAY

Travel / space

FLOODED FESTIVAL

Celebration / time

ASSOCIATIVE BIOMES

The Memory World is one continuous Metroidvania environment. Places, periods and emotions blend through personal associations, allowing impossible transitions while retaining strong biome identities. Origami abilities unlock new routes, shortcuts and secrets across regions.

RESTORATION

A Memory Key instantly rebuilds the entire zone, transforming its layout, routes and connections. Resolved threats disappear; platforming hazards remain, with new paths and secrets to explore.

WORLD STRUCTURE

One world, linked by memory

The house anchors a continuous, interconnected Memory World.

REAL HOUSE

Conversations • Bond • Origami discoveries

TRANSITION

MEMORY HOUSE

Stable anchor • Return point • New routes

GIANT GARDEN

CHILDHOOD / SCALE

Towering plants
and oversized details

ENDLESS RAILWAY

TRAVEL / SPACE

Impossible tracks
and distant stations

FLOODED FESTIVAL

CELEBRATION / TIME

Canals, masks and
repeating festivities

ASSOCIATIVE CONNECTIONS

Origami unlock shortcuts and biome links. Some stages offer a choice between two accessible zones.

DESIGN INTENT / NON-LINEAR EXPLORATION

ORIGINAL GAME CONCEPT • PORTFOLIO GDD

04 / SYSTEMS

Fold imagination into play

Seven origami creations share one readable interaction language.

ORIGAMI MODE

Hold L2 to access Origami Mode. Hold an assigned button for a short folding action (target: up to two seconds). Releasing before completion cancels the fold; tapping does nothing. Origami are inexhaustible, and unlocked creations remain directly accessible.

DESIGN PRINCIPLE / TEACH PROPERTIES, NOT SOLUTIONS

An origami follows a consistent physical property. Some challenges teach a specific use; others invite creative combinations and alternate solutions.

ABILITY OVERVIEW

PLANE	L2 + Square	**GLIDE** Ballistic glide; thrown projectile or rideable plane
FROG	L2 + Cross	**JUMP** Powerful fixed vertical jump
BOAT	L2 + Circle	**FLOAT** Free navigation on still water; currents take control
KITE	L2 + Triangle	**CATCH WIND** Controlled descent; rise in updrafts
RHINO	L2 + R1	**CHARGE** Charge through compatible obstacles
SNAKE	L2 + R2	**GRAB & HOLD** Grapple onto compatible anchor points
FLOWER	L2 + L1	**BLOOM** One local platform on a compatible surface

05 / DESIGN RULES

Systems that combine

Origami expand the boy’s human movement rather than replace it.

BASE MOVEMENT

Walk · Run · Jump · Crouch · Climb · Ledge Climbing · Push · Pull. Dangerous falls and environmental threats cause failure and respawn, framed as slipping into oblivion.

THREE INTERACTION EXAMPLES

PLANE / POSITIONING

The plane converts altitude into horizontal distance. Its trajectory is mainly ballistic: the player prepares the launch and reads airflow instead of freely piloting.

BOAT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

On still water, the boat moves left or right. In a current, the environment takes over. The puzzle lies in choosing where and when to enter.

FLOWER / RECONTEXTUALIZATION

A flower grows only on compatible nearby surfaces, and only one can exist at a time. On a geyser, a timed hazard becomes a moving platform; chaining flowers can create advanced traversal.

OPEN-ENDED PROBLEMS

A gap might be crossed by gliding on the Plane or by chaining Flower platforms. The same environmental situation can reward different readings of the available tools. Precise tuning, targeting and input compatibility remain subject to prototyping.

06 / ENCOUNTERS

Understand, do not fight

Memory Encounters replace much of the traditional combat rhythm with observation and puzzle solving.

ENCOUNTER LOOP

OBSERVE → UNDERSTAND → INTERACT → RESTORE

Memory Threats are ordinary events, people or creatures distorted by El Abuelo’s fading recollection and the child’s imagination. Players study their behavior, avoid danger and sometimes turn the threat into a tool for solving the environment.

MAJOR ENCOUNTER / GIANT GARDEN (PROPOSAL)

Phase 1 / Frog: jump between raised roots to avoid the dog's charges and reach a memory trigger.
Phase 2 / Frog + Flower: create perches to redirect it.

MEMORY KEY / STRUCTURAL RESTORATION

The Memory Key rebuilds roots, paths and shortcuts.
The dog returns to its true form; hazards remain.

INTENDED PACING

Calm observation alternates with traversal and occasional execution-focused moments. Challenges remain accessible and readable, prioritizing discovery over precision-heavy combat.

07 / SHOWCASE MEMORIES

Three worlds, three distortions

Three interconnected biomes shaped by fragments of a lifetime.



CHILDHOOD / SCALE

THE GIANT GARDEN

Layered roots and towering stems create vertical loops and overlooked passages. Frog teaches ascent; Flower adds alternate platforms, while
Rhino opens return shortcuts.

GAMEPLAY / Frog · Flower · Rhino



YOUTH / SPACE

THE ENDLESS RAILWAY

Broken tracks and hanging carriages form long sightlines, gaps and vertical detours. Plane bridges distance; Kite and Snake reveal routes through
elevated stations.

GAMEPLAY / Plane · Kite · Snake



CELEBRATION / TIME

THE FLOODED FESTIVAL

Canals split plazas into islands and shifting routes.
Boat navigates currents; Flower creates temporary footholds.

GAMEPLAY / Boat · Flower

08 / PROGRESSION

Discover. Restore. Return.

The progression loop binds house exploration, origami acquisition and memory restoration.

01 DISCOVER

Discover a damaged origami and its first fragment.

02 RECOVER

Collect four origami fragments in total to unlock it.

03 UNFOLD

Reconstruct an origami and gain a new traversal property.

04 EXPLORE

Solve the zone's Major Encounter to earn a Memory Key.

05 RESTORE

Recompose a memory and return to deepen the relationship.

OPTIONAL DISCOVERY / THE OTOCYON

The otocyon appears near hidden passages. When approached, it flees toward optional content; following it can reveal secret routes and secondary discoveries. Its presence is a consistent diegetic cue, with no need for explicit HUD markers.

COMPLETION & LEGACY

Separate optional memory fragments unlock dialogue topics and narrative rooms, not traversal abilities.

Decline follows story milestones; missed dialogue never blocks 100% exploration. The boy keeps a journal.

CORE GAMEPLAY LOOP

A cycle of discovery and restoration

Each recovered memory opens new possibilities for exploration.

01 **DISCOVER**

Stories and damaged origami

02 **RECOVER**

Find missing fragments

03 **FOLD**

Unlock a new ability

04 **EXPLORE**

Reach new pathways

05 **RESTORE**

Recover a Memory Key

06 **RETURN**

New rooms and stories

REPEAT & RECONTEXTUALIZE

Abilities reveal shortcuts, secrets and deeper layers of Abuelo’s past.

09 / DESIGN AUTHORSHIP

From vision to systems

An original personal game concept designed as an integrated game and level design case study.

CREATIVE VISION & NARRATIVE

Original premise, themes, character arcs, intended player experience and narrative integration.

GAMEPLAY & SYSTEM DESIGN

Core loop, Origami Mode, seven abilities, folding rules, movement, systemic interactions and limitations.

LEVEL & WORLD DESIGN

House HUB, continuous associative biomes, ability gating, shortcuts, backtracking, secrets and restoration states.

PUZZLE & ENCOUNTER DESIGN

Non-combat Memory Encounters, distorted threats, environmental interactions and persistent encounter resolution.

PROGRESSION DESIGN

Origami reconstruction, Memory Keys, HUB relationship progression, optional discoveries and completion goals.

DESIGN STATEMENT

EL ABUELO turns remembering into exploration, folding paper into a systemic gameplay language, and the passing of time into a journey of discovery and transmission.

CONCEPT / PRE-PRODUCTION

Design intentions documented here are not claims of implemented or playtested features.