Echoes of the Past - High Concept

Concept

Echoes of the Past is a **Third Person 3D Time Puzzle** game
in which the player solves puzzles in an ancient temple by **recording** their actions
for **a copy of themselves to repeat** them.

Overview

Platform	PC / Windows
Genre	3D Puzzle-Platformer
Controls	Keyboard / Controller
Engine	Unity

Setting

The game takes place in an ancient overgrown temple, influenced by glowing magic and forgotten by mankind.
Deep in its heart, the gears of time are coming to a standstill, causing time anomalies and drawing the protagonist to the temple.

Goals

Long term: Proceed through the ruins of a mysterious ancient temple and head to the gears of time to set them in motion again.

Short term: Understand the structure of each challenge, prepare the run for your later echo and then proceed by overlapping these actions to get to the end of each room.

Key Features

- ◇ Move & jump
- ◇ Record your actions
- ◇ Rewind time
- ◇ Let echoes repeat your recordings
- ◇ Pressure plates / triggers
- ◇ Doors
- ◇ Pistons
- ◇ Moving platforms
- ◇ Death zones
- ◇ Recording zones where your echo can start

Design Goals

Experimental puzzles: The player can observe the room structure first and without any time pressure. He can then prepare his run by recording actions for his echo and test out a combination of runs.

Soft Learning: Features are introduced step by step, are then expanded and combined with new features; but the player will always know how each individual object behaves.

Multi-layered walkthroughs: See the level from your perspective of preparation and then observe your echoes "setting all pieces of the puzzle together" and helping you out.

Target audience - Persona

Lukas Müller

◇ Age 20 years

◇ <u>Computer gamer</u> - takes time to play games, and plays more focussed than e.g. mobile gamers

◇ <u>Borderline-casual</u> - Plays regularly; ~10 hours a week

◇ <u>Medium-sized budget</u> - Does not want to pay for monthly subscriptions / 70€ for a triple-A game; more likely willing to buy smaller games and play through those

◇ <u>Previous experience with (puzzle) games</u> - understanding of simple, interconnected mechanics and familiar with basic movement in a 3D environment

◇ <u>Problem solver</u> - likes to be challenged and surprised by new puzzles and systematically resolve its components

References

<u>Ratchet & Clank: A Crack in Time </u>*(Clockwork Tower Passage)*
Features recording platforms for different clones and works with clear color coding, making complex features and level design more readable. Recording and resetting mechanic works identical, and clone behavior is similar to Echoes of the Past.

<u>Braid</u>
As an Indie game developed by one person, it features the time rewind mechanic in a similar way and resets the state of objects before the clone repeats the actions. However, we do not want our echo do be hindered by physical objects and have its movement path manipulated like in Braid.

<u>Portal 2</u>
Very convincing modular level design and connections between features. Chambers introduce and alternate features and by combining them increase in pacing. There is a mod called "time machine" that also features time rewind and clones repeating actions, which proves the functionality of this mechanic in modular puzzle games.

Expanded Game Concept

Echoes of the Past features puzzle levels in an ancient temple, which are influenced by time corruptions. This is embedded in the gameplay by echoes of your past actions that overlap in time and help you to get through each room.

This core mechanic can be broken down in several steps, all obeying certain rules:

- **Recording**: At predefined areas, the player can manually start tracking his movement & interactions for a limited amount of time. Each area can save one echo.
- **Rewinding**: When the player stops recording, the room and each object reset to their state at the beginning of the recording. The player is teleported back to his recording area.
- **Overlapping**: After rewinding, all echoes currently saved on areas perform the actions that have been recorded for them. Under no circumstances will they leave their movement and interaction paths. When they have reached the end of their path, they keep standing at that point.

These rules help communicating a complex feature like time travel to the player and answer possible questions for later feature design.

Modifiers of features like pressure plates only interacting with echoes will help connecting features and using them in a more modular way.

Game Structure

Pacing and player progress can be separated into two layers:

The first layer means a smaller increase in pacing and is regulated through the complexity of each room's features. Starting with simply introducing the feature

and its behavior over expanding the content in one room up to combining it with features in new ways gradually increases pacing.

The second layer is adding the possibility for another echo, so that the player has to think about more "pieces" to put together with his echoes. This exponentially increases pacing. Therefore, after having gone through the whole first layer of pacing increase, another echo is introduced and features start simple again, then going up in difficulty as explained above.

This way, we have a variance in pacing in the form of a sinus curve with constant increments from feature difficulty going up, and spikes from introducing more echoes.

Narratively, the corruption of time is symbolized with more and more echoes overlapping, and the player having to go back and forth multiple times until finally, overlapping multiple echoes unlocks the path to the gears of time.

Team

Soren Wagner	- Producer
Jacob Menz	- Game / Level Designer
Silvan Koch	- Game Designer / Assistant Engineer
Robin Hentschel	- Engineer
Pia Krensel	- 3D Environment Artist
Lisa Günther	- 3D / UI / Concept Artist
Melina Startmann	- Character / Animation Artist
Sylvia Exner	- Concept / VFX Artist