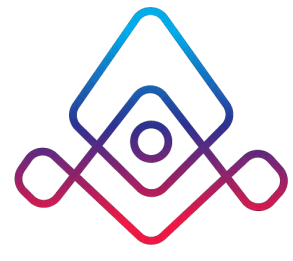# Safe Space

An augmented reality lens utilizing Snapchat's platform to create an immersive experience to improve mental health in youth.

Where It All Started

Snap Inc. and Next Shift Learning teamed up to create the Snap Academies, which are 9-week career development programs in design, storytelling, engineering, and Lens for community college students interested in the tech industry. I was fortunate to be one of the 15 participants to join the Lens program. During the program, my cohort and I developed skills in creating AR experiences using tools such as Lens Studio, JavaScript, Blender, Photoshop, and After Effects. With the skills that were developed, we collaborated as a team of two to create a lens that focuses on socially conscious themes.
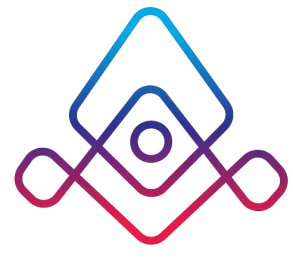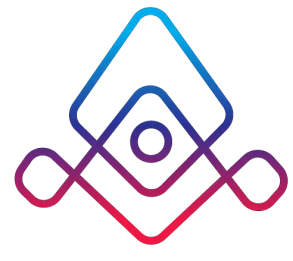
About the Project
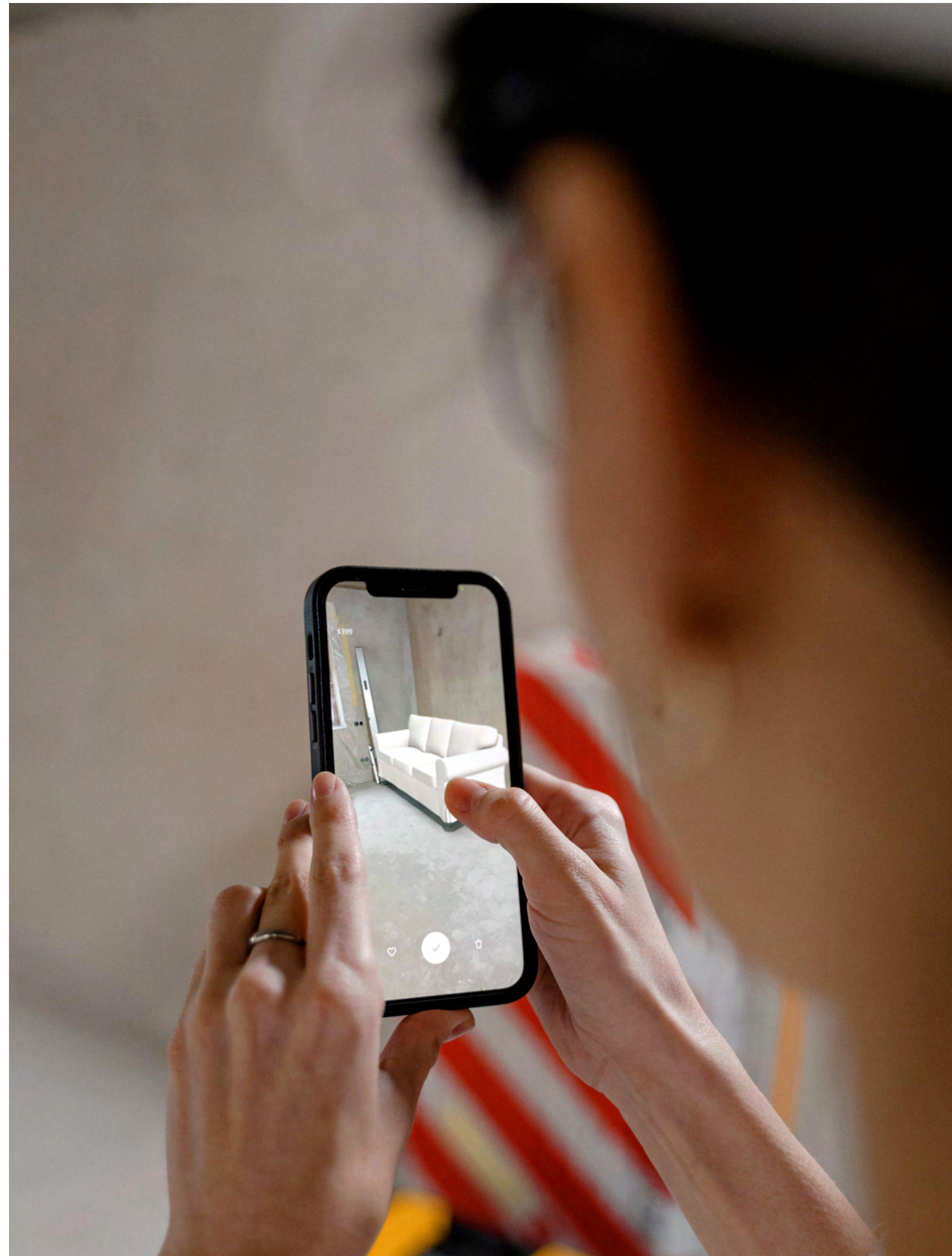
Social media has greatly influenced and transformed how people connect with each other, engage with products, and access global news.

Platforms like Snapchat have provided users with creative outlets to express themselves, share their daily lives, and find their voice. Leveraging the technology and social platform offered by Snap Inc., our group has developed an interactive augmented reality (AR) experience focused on Mental Health for Youth.

As part of this initiative, we have created a lens called Safe Space to provide a supportive environment to connect with friends through positive expressions, uplifting affirmations, and engaging interactivity, all within the comfort of your own home. Its purpose is to help combat the negative effects of social isolation and depression that have been caused by the pandemic. Our group has dedicated time to explore, research, and test the lens, ensuring its maximum effectiveness in enabling users to connect and support one another, regardless of their location.

Research

We have focused our attention on youths aged 13-21 who have been isolated in their homes, away from human connections, support systems, and outdoor activities due to the pandemic. Through research, our solution to this issue is to create a similar social and safe environment for young adults to self-express. Allowing this social behavior can lower depression and help develop communication and social skills among young adults.

Project Goals

Having clear goals gives you a clear focus on what you want the product to achieve. You can then take control of the direction of the idea and work towards achieving these goals.

Goal 01

Share Information About Mental Health

Snapchat has a large user base, particularly among younger generations who are digitally connected. This makes it accessible to a wide audience, including those who may not actively seeking out mental health resources. Interactive experiences captures users attention and increase engagement. Also, AR lenses can provide awareness and educate users about mental health conditions and coping strategies. It can provide informative visuals, statistics, and/or interactive features that help users gain better understanding of mental health related issues.

Goal 02

Safe Environment To Interact With

Interactive features within a lens provides a safe place and privacy to help users feel more comfortable exploring and engaging with mental health content. Lenses that incorporate positive affirmations, encouraging messages, and interactive elements can enhance users confidence, self-worth, and motivation to prioritize their mental health. In addition, lenses are able to incorporate call to action buttons that can bring users to mental health resources and support services.

Goal 03

Being Able To Connect With Others Virtually

Providing the option to invite friends in an AR lens for mental health acknowledges the importance of social support in mental well-being. It leverages the power of relationships to promote understanding, accountability, motivation, and help-seeking, ultimately creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for mental health discussions and activities.

Audience Persona 01

An audience persona (also referred to as a buyer persona or customer persona) is a fictional profile that represent groups of similar people in your target audience. This can help you figure out how to reach people on a more personal level, while delivering the right messages.

Name: Maya Patel

Age: 17

Occupation: High School Student

Location: Los Angeles, CA

About: Maya is passionate about technology and social media platforms for positive change. She strongly believes in the importance of mental health and wants to create a safe and supportive environment for herself and her peers to address mental well-being.

Likes & Hobbies: Technology, art, music, nature, outdoor activities

Personality: Compassionate, empathetic, creative, open-minded, and highly motivated

Social Media: Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok

Frustrations: Lack of privacy/safe environment for discussing mental health on popular social media platforms. She is concerned about the stigma surrounding mental health and the misunderstandings that often arise, which make it difficult for individuals to seek help or openly discuss their struggles.

Their Needs: Interactive and safe environment for exploring mental health topics without fear of judgement or stigma. Additional educational resources that can help better understand mental health conditions, coping strategies, and techniques for self-care. Having a community and connection with like-minded individuals, facilitating discussions, sharing experiences, and providing support for each other.

Audience Persona 02

An audience persona (also referred to as a buyer persona or customer persona) is a fictional profile that represent groups of similar people in your target audience. This can help you figure out how to reach people on a more personal level, while delivering the right messages.

Name: Ryan Thompson

Age: 21

Occupation: Marketing Assistant

Location: Seattle, Washington

About: Ryan recently graduated college and entered the professional world. He has a strong interest in mental health and is passionate about promoting well-being in their own life and the lives of others. Ryan believes that technology, such as augmented reality, can play a significant role in creating accessible and engaging resources for mental health.

Likes & Hobbies: Photography, yoga, meditation, yoga, literature, travel

Personality: Empathetic, introspective, driven, motivated, good listener, adaptable, and supportive

Social Media: Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter

Frustrations: Lack of authentic mental health content on social media platforms that encounter misleading information and does not provide meaningful support. There are limited accessible resources that are convenient within social media apps and lack of personalized and interactive content available.

Their Needs: Providing reliable and evidence-based information can help deepen their understanding. Interactive experience can add as an activity/tool to enhance their well-being and provide a unique learning experience.
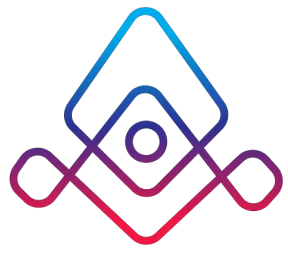
Concepts

As a team, we brainstormed various concepts that we believed would have the greatest impact, as well as the most feasible with our given time.

Design Solutions

Here we will find creative solutions and design styles that help you target your goals. Keep in mind that these solutions can be changed throughout the sketch and design process.

Interactive features will include users to help manage stress, anxiety, and improve their overall mental health. Features will include positive affirmations, moveable objects that can be use for creative use, send positive messages, and facts on mental health to provide a fun and educated experience. The lens will also have a front facing lens for users to interact with and see themselves.
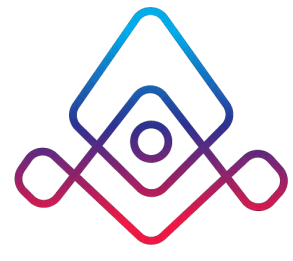

Environment will be a secure and immersive space that surrounds users all in the comfort of their own home. 3D models and sound will be incorporated to build a unique environment for users to have a immersive experience.
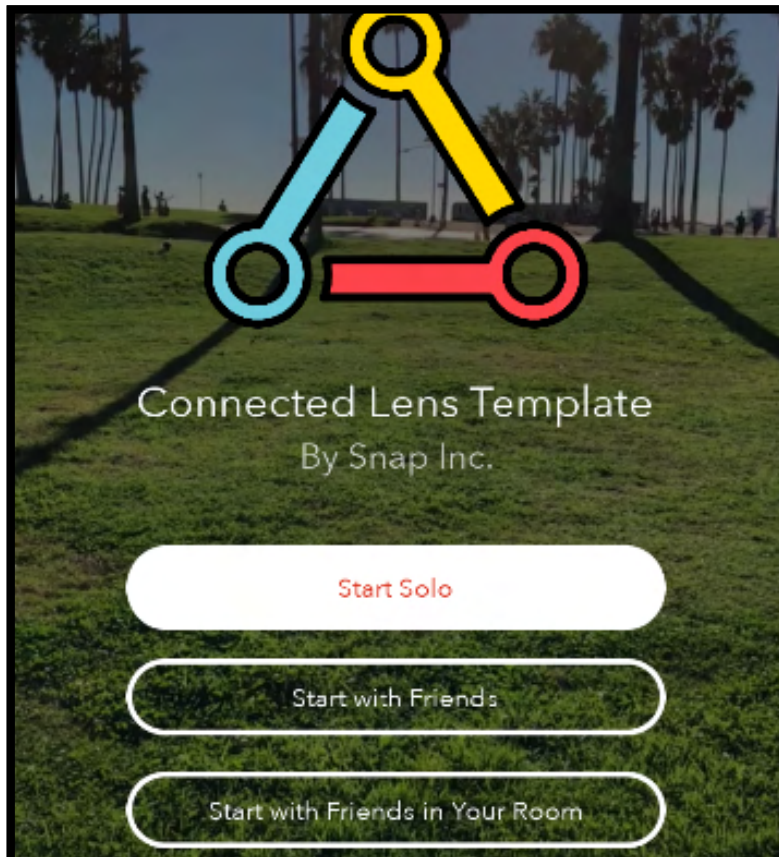
Using the connected feature on lens studio will allow users to have the option to participate with their friends. This feature allows users to establish a support system by engaging with someone they trust from their Snapchat friends list. It creates a safe environment where friends can connect and come together with a supportive manner.

From our research, simulating a game like Animal Crossing by Nintendo is one of the biggest coping mechanisms due to its social life simulation. A player is free to build on their own island and do anything they wish within the parameters of the game providing a creative space that promotes a calm, positive, and stress free zone.

Moodboard

This moodboard follows an Animal Crossing theme to create a safe environment for Snapchat users to immerse themselves in with friends.

Direction:
This direction aims to create a peaceful feel within a 3D game-like environment. The combination of the elements can create a peaceful experience and provides many interactive activities for users to enjoy together.

Color Palette:
Color palette consists of nature like colors to give a sense of freshness, serenity, and vitality to the environment. Each color and shade represents a outdoor object.

Typography:
A playful san serif font complements the tranquil outdoor setting while maintaining a modern and approachable appearance.

Please note font and colors may change in the design process.

Lanterns, bamboo trees, and a heat source brings warmth and comfort.

Animals can be added into the environment and act as touch points for interaction.
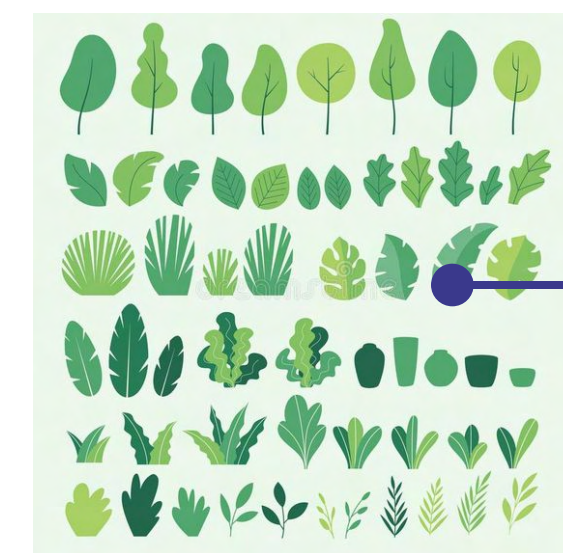
Fun and whimsical fonts give a sense of playfulness and follow the Animal Crossing theme.
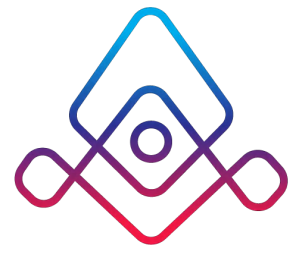
Surrounding users with affirmations can improve mental health and uplift negativity.
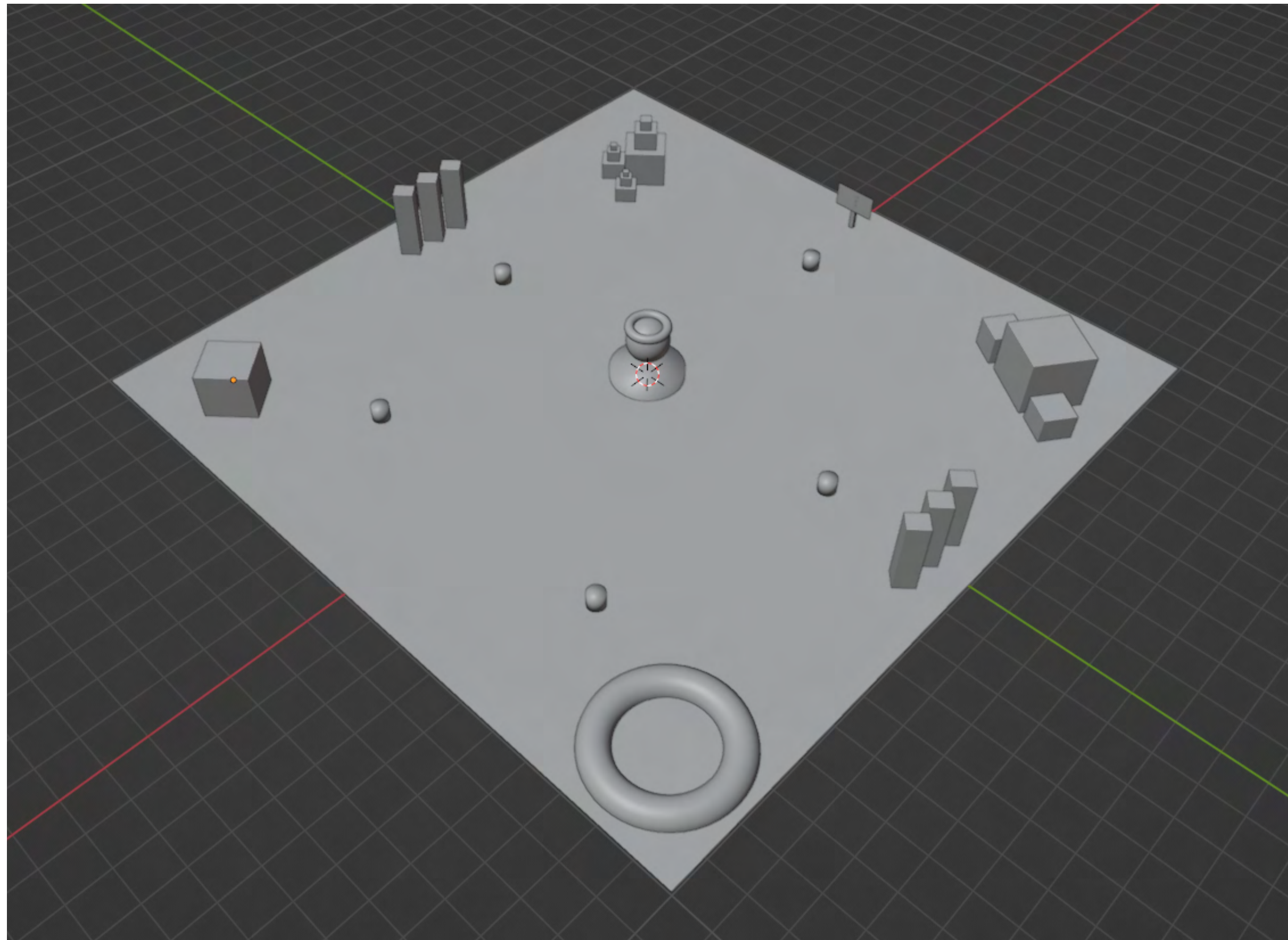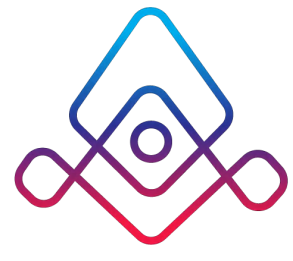
Using different foliage can enhance the visual appeal and bring the environment to life.
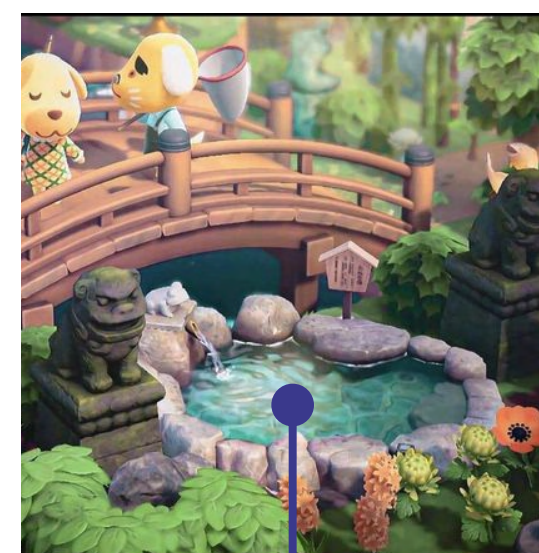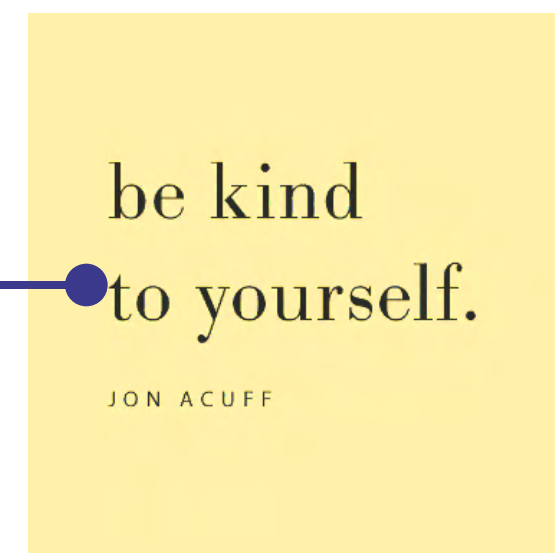
Incorporating a pond or some sort of water stream can bring that soothe and calm feel for the environment.
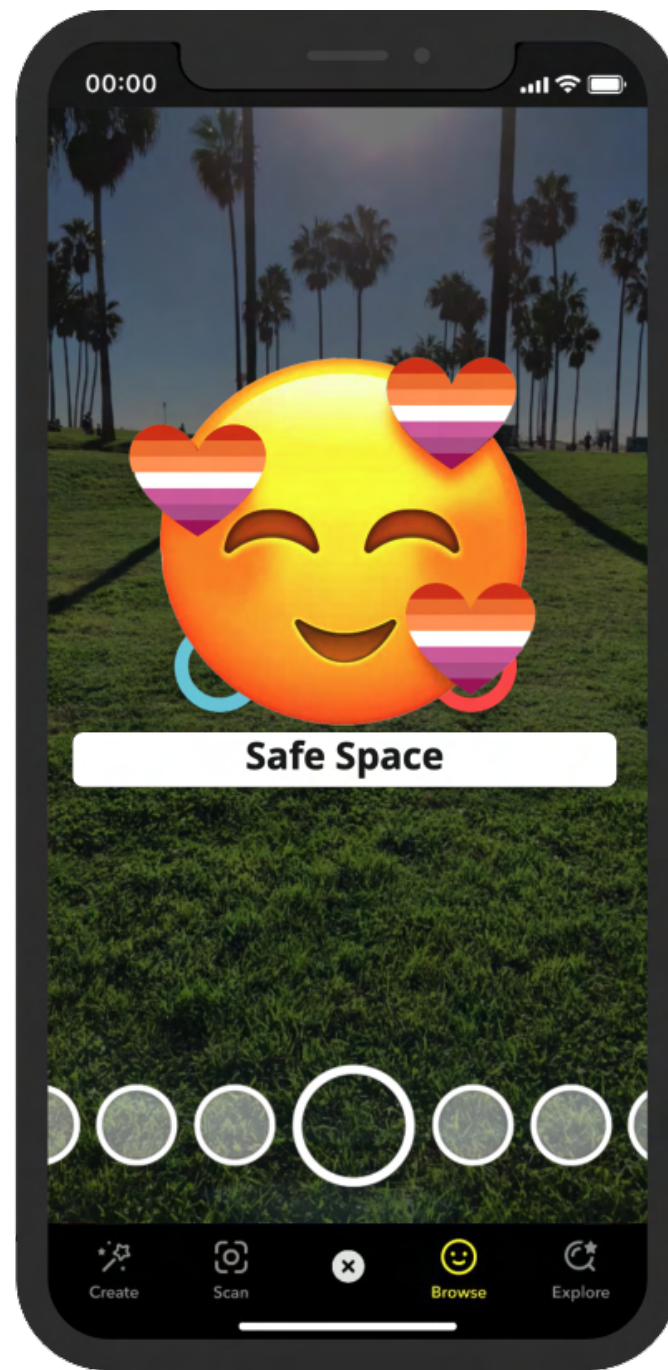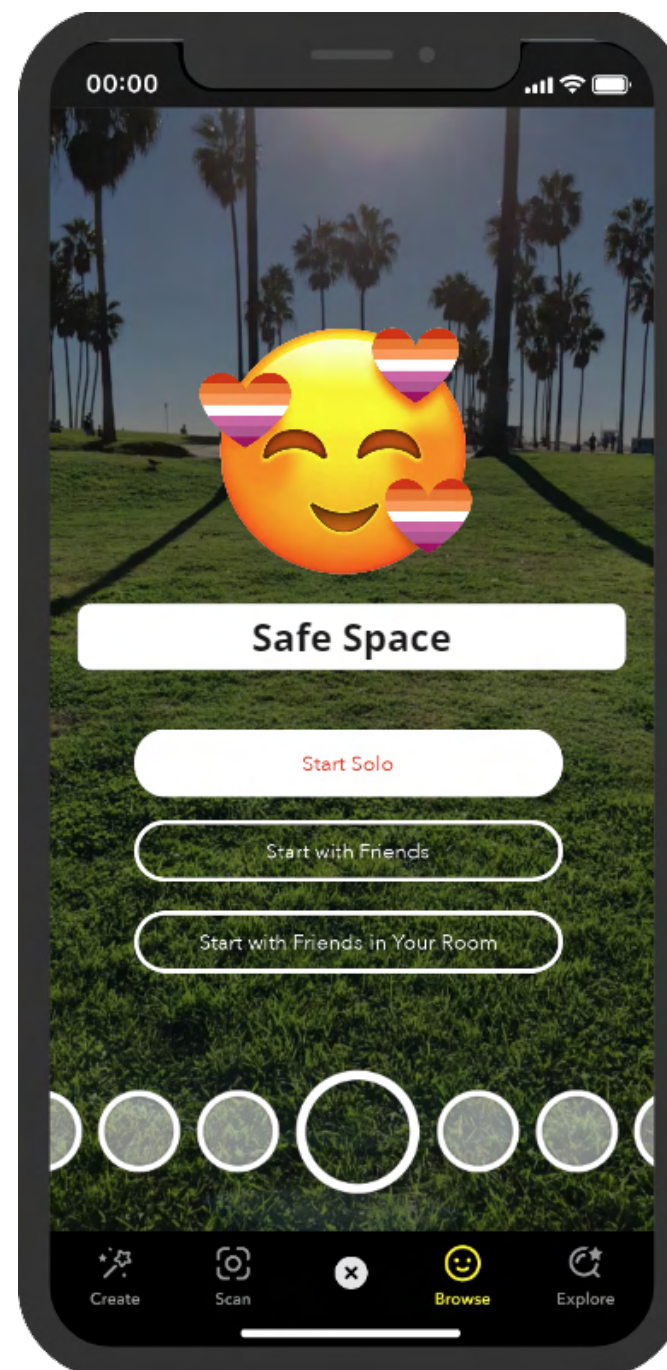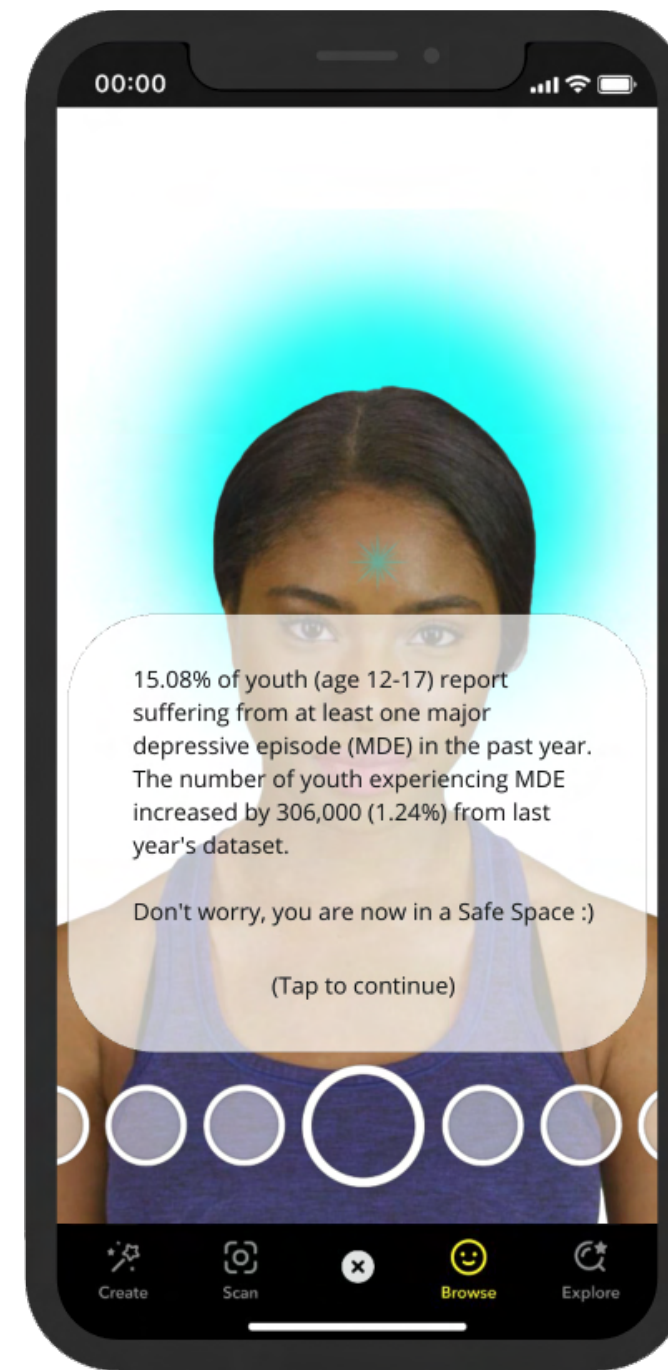
Blueprint

Storyboard

Camera: Front and back camera
Launch: Loading screen with name and lens icon.
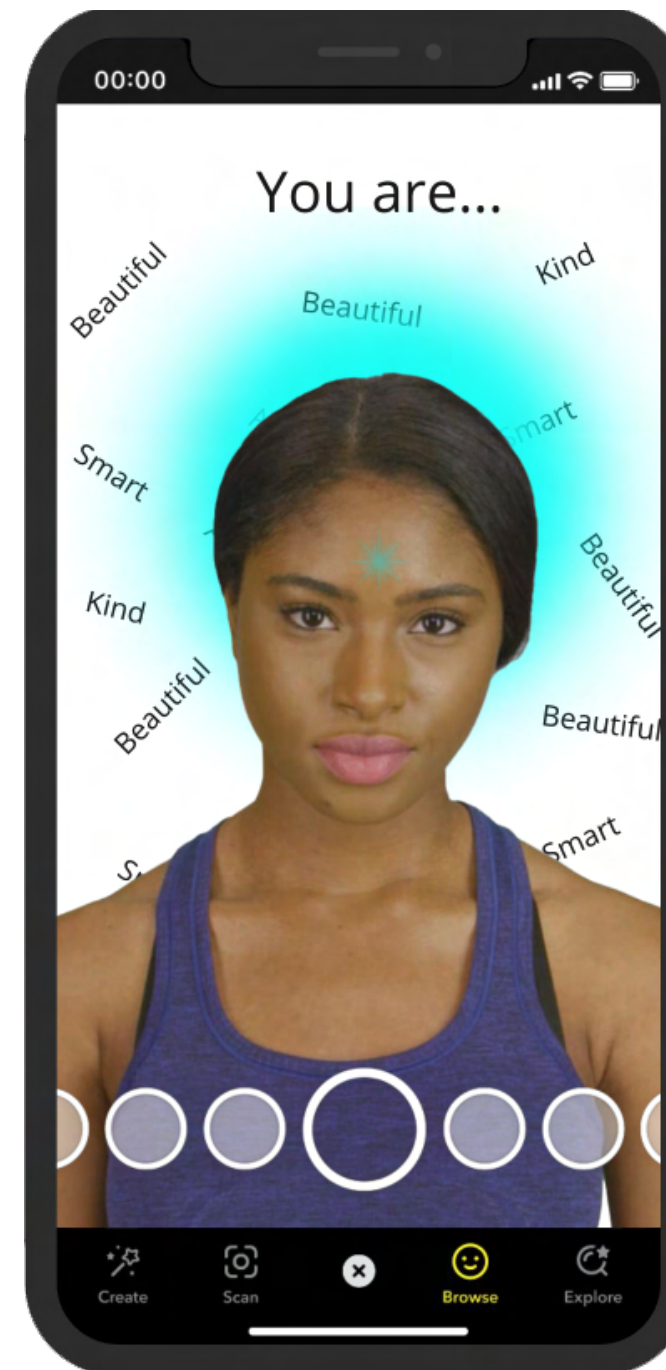
Camera: Front and back camera
Main Menu: Select option to start.
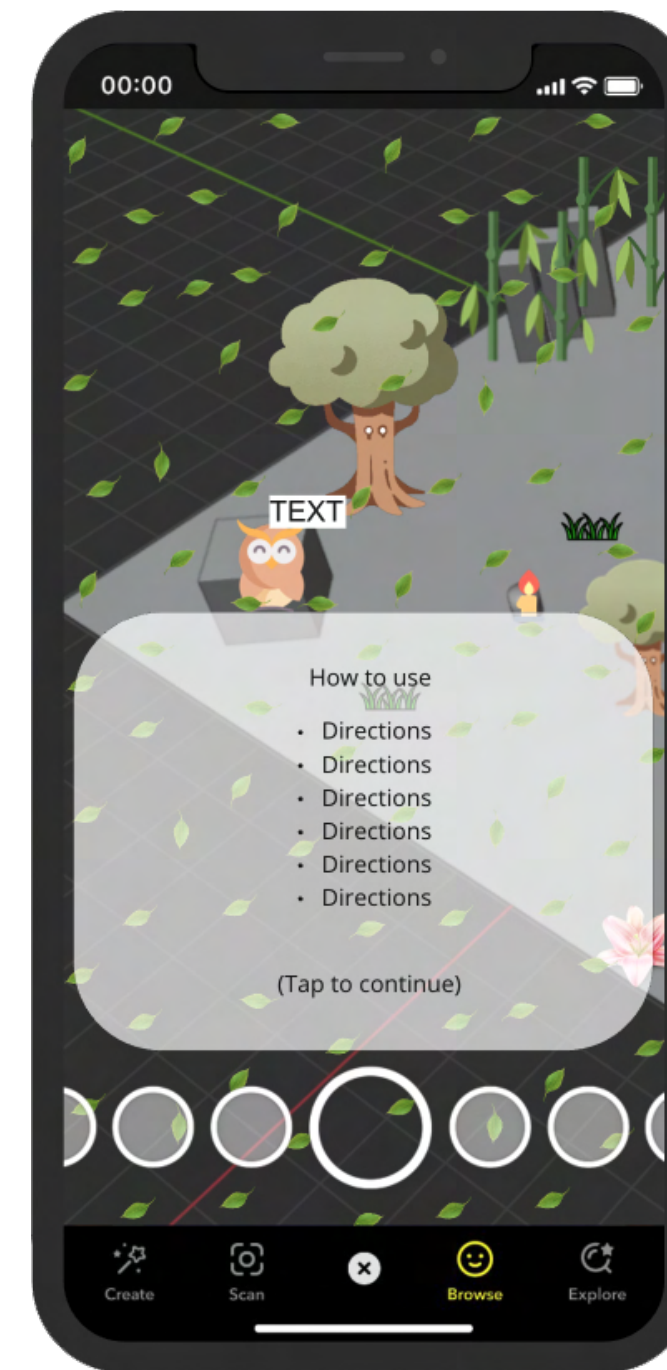
Camera: Front camera
Trigger: Tap
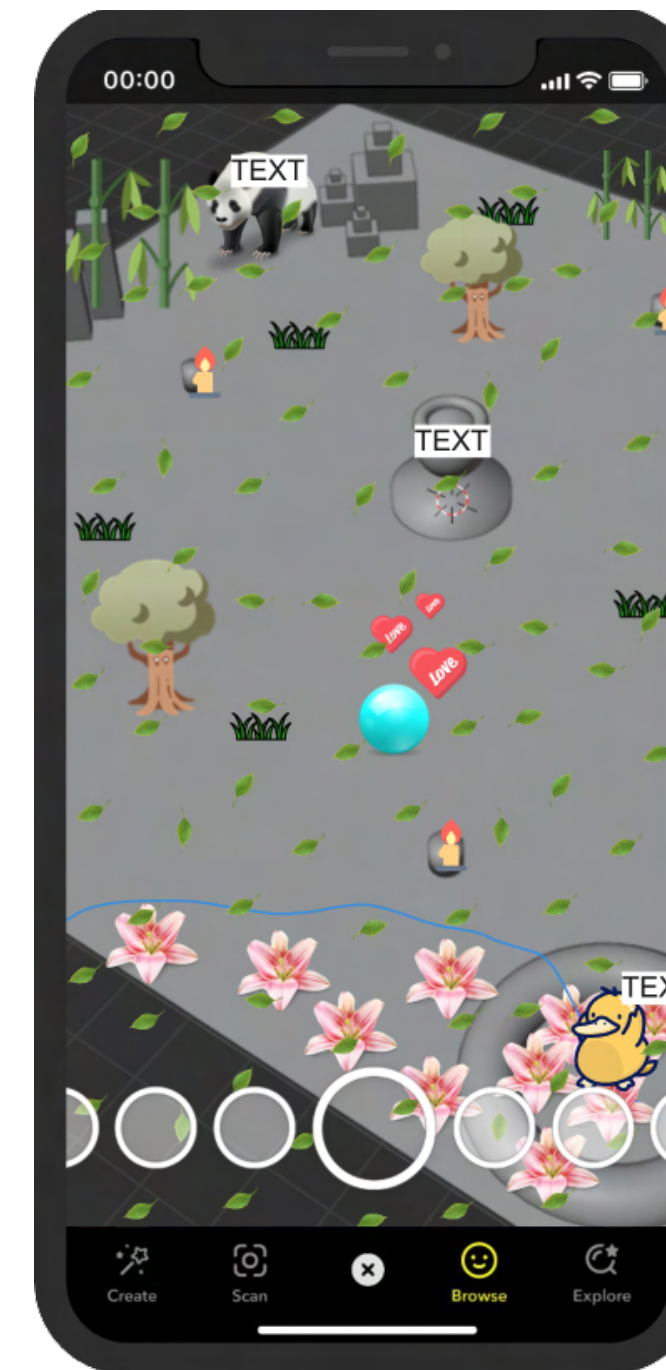**Action:** Closes information bubble.

Camera: Front camera
On Screen: Words will be flowing out from users head along with a aura effect.
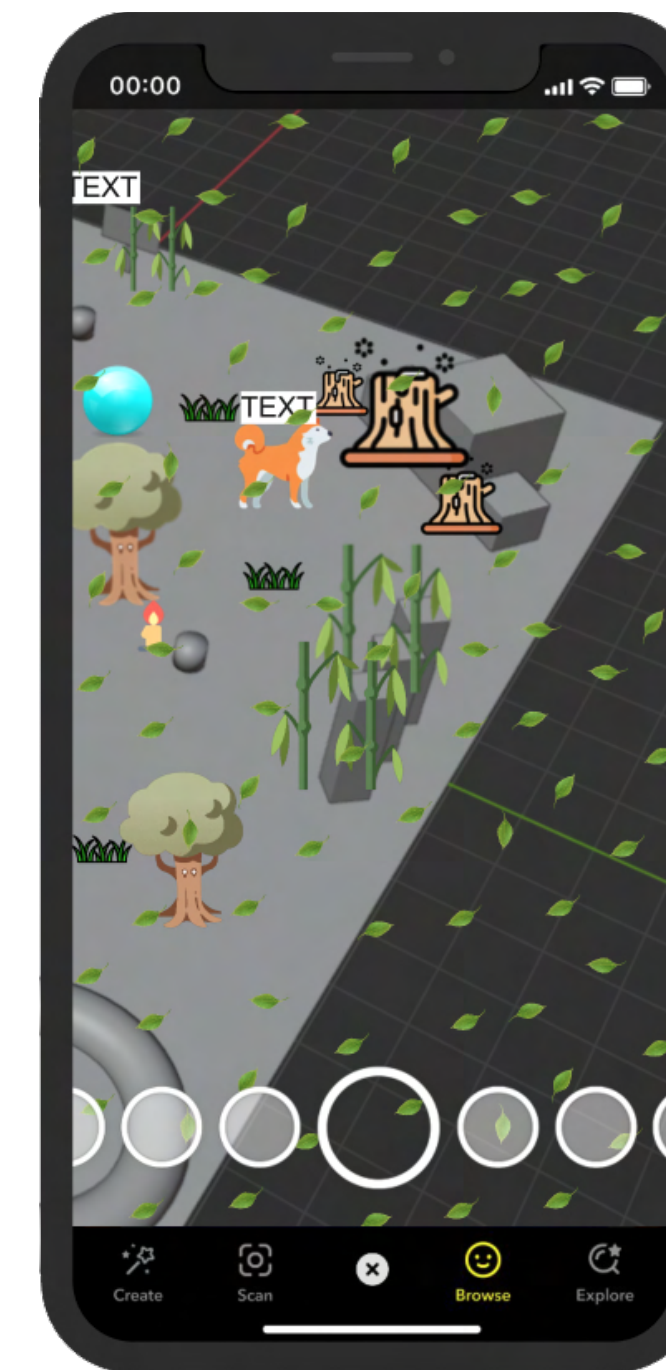
Camera: Back camera
Trigger: Tap
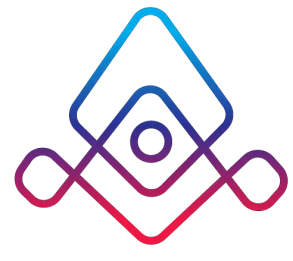**Action:** Directions will pop up to learn how to interact with the environment.

Camera: Back camera
Action: Walk around in real life to navigate your surroundings.

Camera: Back camera
Action: Walk around in real life to navigate your surroundings.

Environment

Model

The designer was in charge of texture (images applied to the model to break the uniform appearance of an material), materials (optical properties of a model such as color, dull, and/or shiny), and model manipulation for this project.
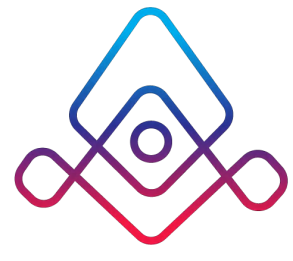
Prototype

The lens is built in Lens Studio, an augmented reality software made by Snap Inc. where artists and developers can build AR experiences.

In this stage, the designer will take the concept and assets for usage in Lens Studio. Models (including textures and materials), images, lookup tables, and any other resources will be put together into one scene to create the final outcome for users to use on Snapchat.

The lens will go through publishing where the designer will add basic information and keywords for visibility for Snapchat users to find. When submitted, Snap Inc. will verify the lens for users to use on their devices.
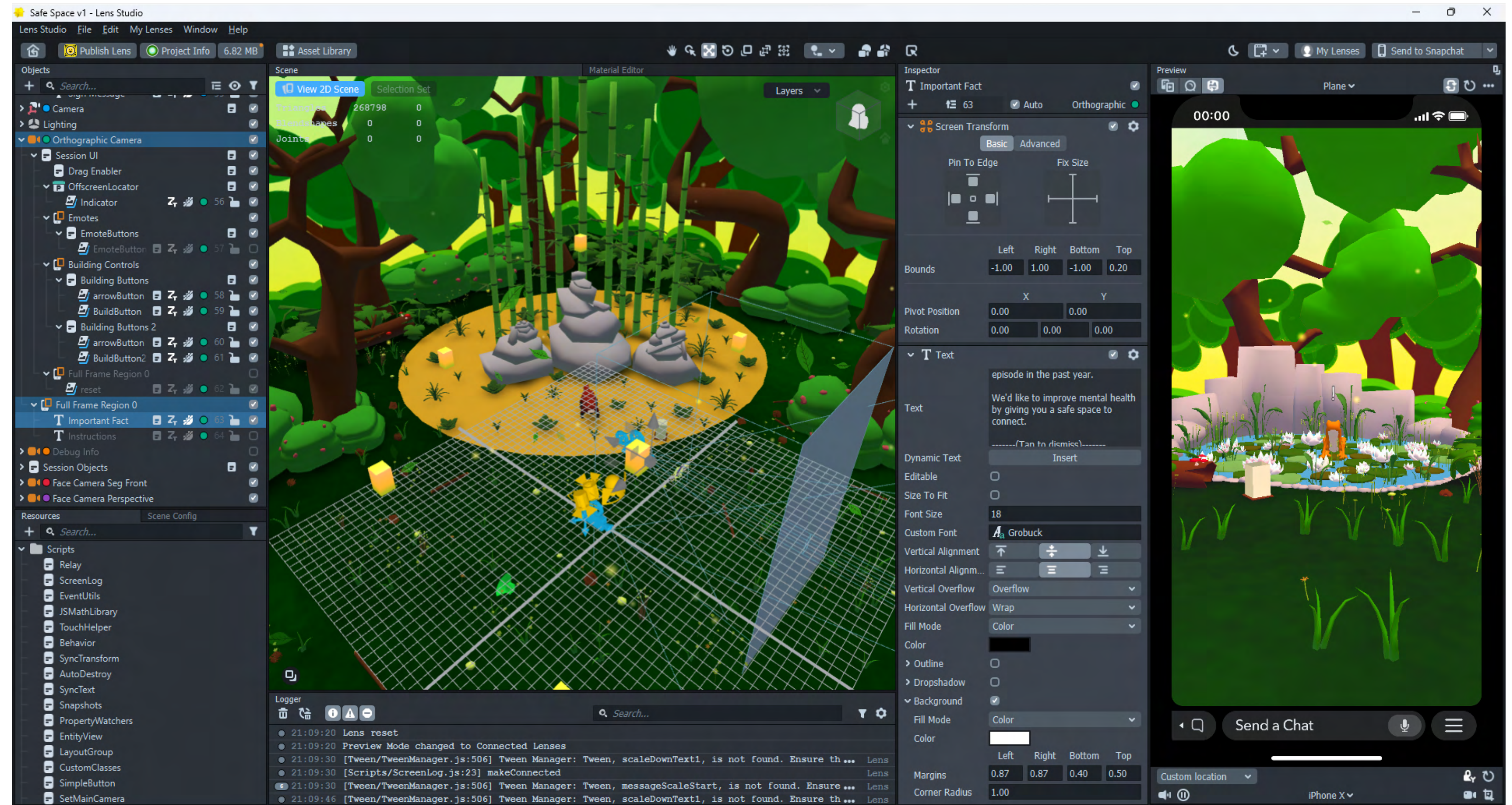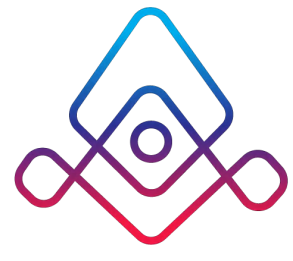
Safe Space Lens

Once Snap Inc. has accepted the submission, Snapchat users are able to access the lens through a unique Snap QR Code or link that will automatically open the lens in the Snapchat app.

Scan QR code to try lens.
Link: Safe Space

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Thank you!

Ask any questions or contact me through the provided information below.