The level design in Mirrors Edge manages to give the player the impression of an open world whilst in reality having rather small playable areas. Its interesting use of colour allows for a fresh aesthetic look and is a good use of point of focus and path manipulation. The vibrancy of the red against primarily plain white exteriors with blue shadows and sky draws the player's focus and the choices of green, and yellow as interior colours allows the red to stand out. Art director of Mirror's Edge Johannes Söderqvist described the choice of red by saying "Red looks so awesome against white and it is a very strong vibrant color... I also think it comes down to the symbolism of red: 'a red thread', red to draw the eye of a bull etc... The idea of 'runner vision' is linked with a sense that it is Faith's intuition and I think red fits well." (CG Society: Mirrors Edge, n.d.)

Point of focus is defined by "what the designer wants the player to be looking at... it can be done by any means including sound, motion, shape, light or color... The simplest way to give a point focus with color and light is accents and contrasts" (Color Theory in Level Design, 2010)

The level "Chapter 1 – Flight" serves to effectively teach the player all the skills that will be required in the game and demonstrate most of the different types of situations they will face without becoming overwhelming. The player goes through a process of using the basic mechanics and commands taught in the tutorial level in a practical manner whilst being shown how the rest of the game is – for the most part at least – going to play.

This level effectively uses stress and release as a means of keeping the player engaged and in order to maintain 'flow'. At the beginning of the level there is no real pressure as the player is expected to be having enough difficulty with the environment and controls, but later after the player has been given time to adjust and learn the player has to deal with being chased by SWAT teams and helicopters. This is broken by periods of calm which allow the player to relax and catch their breath.

The story sequences and quality voice acting allow for the player to more easily become emotionally invested in the story and feel empathy for the characters, Faith's sister in particular.

When looking at what the level does wrong the answer is very little. At times the runner vision can feel much like handholding but it is absolutely necessary at some points in order to keep the player moving which is very much the main theme of the game play. As a result in other parts of the game it would perhaps be far more conspicuous for its absence which would break the player's engagement making it better to use it even if its not completely necessary.

Now I'm going to step through the key points of the level and discuss how certain techniques and elements assist the design of the level.

As soon as the level starts, before the player even gains control of Faith she looks directly at the first objective of the level, this serves to show the player exactly which way to go to begin heading.

A short way onward a rat runs into the electrified fence and dies. This demonstrates to the player that touching the fence causes harm. The player can also see the highlighted pipe showing that they have to use it to progress. This is the first use of 'runner vision' outside of the tutorial.

After leaping the fence as the player runs forward a ramp and a pipe turn red. The level is attempting to reinforce to the player that they need to trust the 'runner vision'. After using one of these elements to clear the gap between buildings a pole lights up in the corner of view, leading the character to the right.
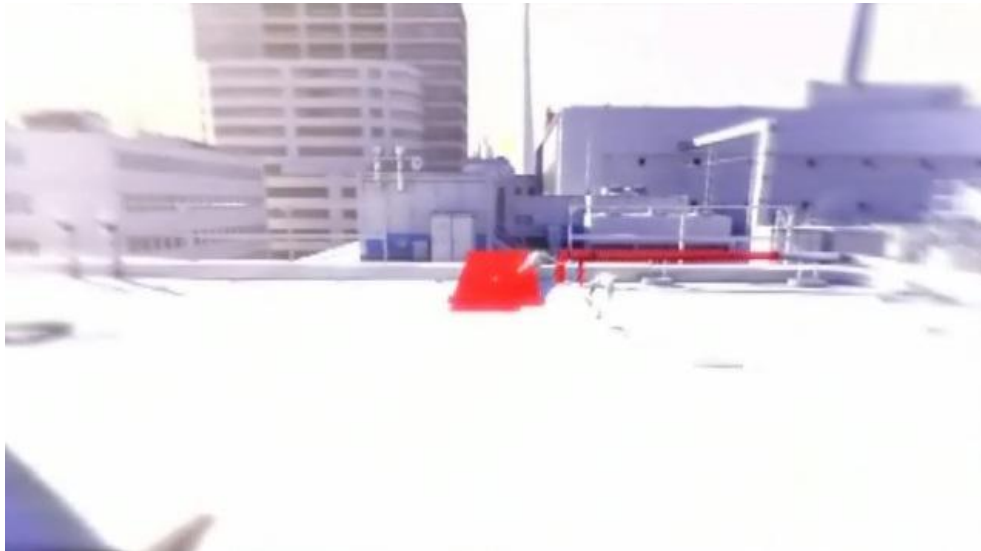
A look towards the objective building shows a red door on a balcony which tells the player they have to attempt the leap. Without this fairly direct instruction it would take many players a while before they would consider attempting this.

Level interiors are drastically different consisting of almost entirely single path hallways and coloured in bold greens or yellows. Interior environments are largely very direct hallways that the player runs through.

The player loses control for a short story moment, during which they are introduced to Faith's sister who has just been framed for the murder of a mayoral candidate. This attempts to get the player to empathise with the character of the sister so that we will be worried about her wellbeing later therefore creating an emotional investment in the player.

As soon as the player regains control SWAT begin pouring into the building. The music changes and the player can hear the SWAT team talking on the radio. This triggers anxiety as the player has to either run

or die. The player instictually will go the opposite direction which will lead the player in a wide circle around the SWAT team to a set of stairs which will reinforce to the player the desire the game gives to get as high off the ground as possible.

The next set of challenges will require the player to use a variety or abilities and drive the player towards the end by way of having to avoid the pursuing police. Sequences such as crawling slowly through a vent with bullets hitting the vent and SWAT members shouting bring anxiety to very high level.

The sight of a red door signifying an exit relieves most of the player's anxiety.

This is short lived once the player sees the helicopter waiting outside and is forced to slide down the side of the building. A feat that otherwise would probably be a last resort becomes instinctual.

Running down a narrow pathway with machine gun rounds flying past Faith's ears brings the anxiety right up again and removes hesitation for the jump. A red runner symbol can be seen which indicates a hidden package location. As the player turns there is a blue fire escape. This use of blue rather than the usual red can cause some hesitation as blue is normally seen as bad but its contrast against the white makes it the point of focus regardless.

Once the player re-enters an interior the anxiety lowers. Then a SWAT team leaves the elevator in front of you forcing a re-route.

The player circles around the SWAT team into the elevator then is trapped helpless while they open fire at the door. This forces anxiety right back up, then down to nothing as the elevator begins to move and Faith exhales heavily and is reassured by Merc via the radio.

The relief doesn't last long once the SWAT team catches up and chases Faith through another building. The player runs through a glass walkway while getting shot from the right.

This is an example of where the game presents the player the illusion of split paths. The player can duck under the lowering screen or keep going forward and leap over a wall on the left. They both lead to the same point after only a few metres.

The player is introduced to combat for the first time by having to take out or evade and escape two cops. There is also the option of disarming a cop and shooting the other. Though this is ultimately futile with gunfights not being an important game element, in fact many of the game's mechanics are impossible while armed.

The gunfire from a helicopter allows for no hesitation. Something the player has to get used to for events later in the game.
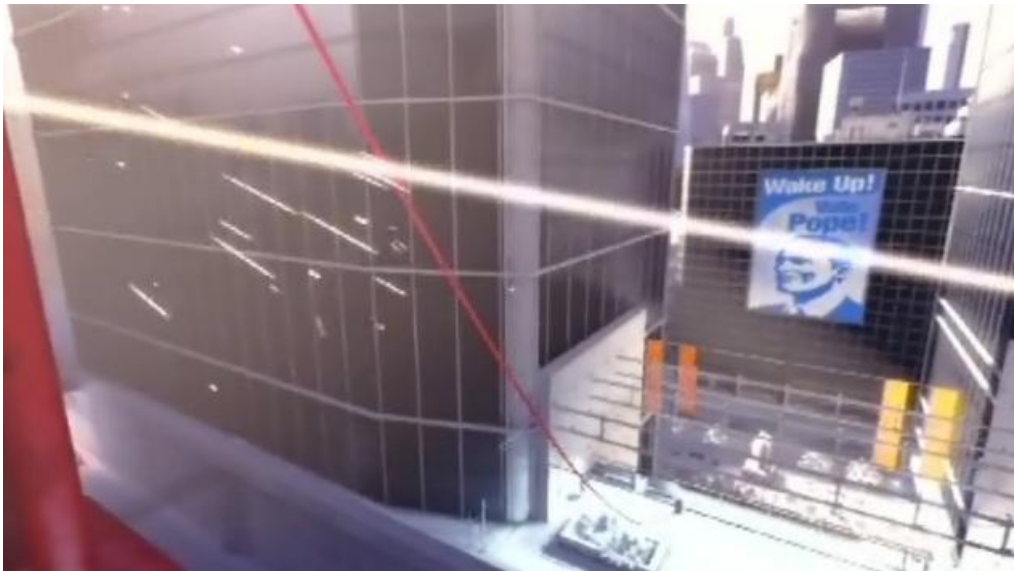
A slow motion loss of control sequence as Faith escapes, falling through a glass ceiling before being led away by a friendly NPC is not only aesthetically brilliant but allows for a slow release of anxiety, winding the level to a close.

'Flight' serves as a perfect example of how to teach the player practical use of taught skills. It uses point of focus in a very direct but logical way to guide the player in such a way as to maintain near constant action which serves to generate the overall feel of the game and its use of anxiety and release serves with this to perfectly keep the player engaged.

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