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The Garden of Forking Paths

Curator’s Foreword

When the NIMROD computer, the first machine that was designed specifically to play a game, made its debut at the 1951 Festival of Britain, few could have predicted the prolific rise of the video game, now a multi-billion dollar industry rivaling the motion picture as the most profitable entertainment industry.

This exhibition draws together notable historic and contemporary computer games created by artists who push the boundaries of the genre and break the orthodox set of rules.

“...each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one... He creates, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves proliferate and fork...”
— Jorge Luis Borges

The presented pieces span the last three decades, from Jaron Lanier’s 1983 Commodore64 game *Moondust* through to three works from 2014—a period which has seen incredible advances in technology and the birth of the information age. To this end we have sourced several ‘antique’ computers in order for some of the older pieces to be presented with authenticity.

All of the pieces in the show can be played by visitors and will raise many questions about the individual artist’s perspective on play, narrative, technology and interaction.

Jaron Lanier is often referred to as the father of virtual reality, pioneering the invention of the Data Glove—a direct precursor of the Wii remote—in the 1980s. His game *Moondust* is the earliest example of an art video game.

Laurie Anderson’s and Hsin-Chien Huang’s 1995 *Puppet Motel* CD-ROM presents a series of beautifully crafted interactive rooms, filled with Anderson’s stories, imagery and music.

Andy Deck is interested in collective activism online. In *Space Invaders Act 1732* (1995) he plays with the symbolism of the arcade classic to challenge the authority of multinationals and global brands.

When Jakub Dvorský completed his thesis project *Samorost* (2003) at the Academy of Arts in Prague, he could hardly have imagined the worldwide acclaim that the game would receive when it was published on the web.

Anita Fontaine’s and Mike Pelletier’s game *CuteXDOomII* (2008) is a game modification, taking an existing gun-toting and gore-fueled game and replacing the characters and scenery with menacing looking ‘cute’ Japanese toys in a lurid coloured castle.

*Tale of Tales* is an independent game company initiated by artists Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn who have been creating internet based artworks since the mid 1990s. *The Path* (2009) is their reworking of the Little Red Riding Hood story.

A contemporary work from 2014, *B.E.T.T.Y. 2.0* by Andrew Burrell and Chris Rodley invites audience members to share their private thoughts with a responsive entity created by data-mining millions of social media messages in real time.

Two works made in 2014 by David O’Reilly demonstrate the latest contemporary technologies. *Mountain* is an allegorical ‘anti-game’, and *Character Mirror* is a foray into use of the Oculus Rift VR headset, a very simple piece that simply shows the users reflection in a virtual mirror as if they are a 3D character.

The Garden of Forking Paths exhibition seeks to showcase the diversity within contemporary and historical art based video games. The exhibition take its title from a novel By Jorge Luis Borges considered a precursor to today’s web based hypertext.

Neil Jenkins
Curator

Image: Installation view of The Garden of Forking Paths
The Garden of Forking Paths

Education Resource

Introduction

Identifying ‘artgames’ or strategies of artists who work in independent gaming, the viewer encounters inventive interfaces, non-mainstream storylines, experimental gameplay and a defiance of the expectations of conventional game outcomes. Détournement is at the forefront of Artgames or Game Art. The idea of détournement comes from the writings of the Situationists, meaning to overturn the established order, to use the tools of the institution to overthrow convention and create new meaning by juxtaposition and appropriation.

"By modding\(^1\), hacking, exploiting and other strategies of intervention, artists, game designers and players have responded to preset game limits and other practical and creative boundaries. They have responded by producing artefacts and activity that re-appropriate dominant culture, where normal tropes and memes are subverted…”\(^2\)

In contextualising games from an art historical perspective, the legacy of Surrealism, Dada, Situationism, performance art, conceptual art and Fluxus all explore the idea of play as a form of resistance. These movements disrupted convention and existed beyond the gallery walls, stretching to the streets and cafes away from the hierarchies of institutions. Play is used as an intervention to question and challenge existing stereotypes.

This idea of play as a means to challenge authority or to address social issues has been taken up by artists across the Twentieth Century through to the present. Some possible reference points for The Garden of Forking Paths exhibition include: Alberto Giacometti’s game board related artworks in the 1930s; Yoko Ono’s all white chess board of 1970 Play it by trust; Salvador Dalí’s Mae West Lips Sofa, 1937; Joan Miro Portrait of a man in a late nineteenth century frame, 1950; Joseph Cornell Ants playing with cards 1930s; Max Ernst’s 1929 collage novel La Femme 100 têtes (The woman of 100 heads); George Grosz Fit for active service 1916-17, a comic image of a skeleton cleared to go to war; through to Joseph DeLappe’s game intervention work entitled dead-in-iraq, an ongoing work from 2006.

On 25 June 2010, the first British independent game conference was held in London, something which attests to the fluidity and newness of the genre, the parameters of which are still changing and shifting as technology emerges. Artists working in this field are embracing new technologies in the production of their work.

The title of the exhibition, The Garden of Forking Paths is the name of a novel by Jorge Luis Borges written in 1941 which is considered a seminal text for new media studies as its structure is representative of the layers of hypertext present on the internet.

Madeleine Kelman Snow
Education Resource Writer

"Games are significant for what they embody; human computer interface, notions of agency, sociality, visualisation, cybernetics, representation, embodiment, activism, narrative and play. These and a whole host of other issues are significant not only to the game designer but also present in the work of the artist that thinks and rethinks games.”\(^3\)

Bibliography and References


\(^{1}\) Modding is a slang reference meaning ‘to modify’ and refers to altering games, changing hardware or software unintended by the original designer and sharing them online.


http://www.furtherfield.org/artistsrethinkinggames_booklaunch.php
Jaron Lanier (USA)
Moondust, (1983), computer game for Commodore 64

Artwork and Influences

In considering, Moondust it is tricky to isolate the game from its maker, as the figure of Jaron Lanier looms large as a pioneer—if not genius—in the field of computer science and technology. In 2010, Lanier has been listed in Time Magazine as one of the one hundred people who most affect our world—amongst ‘leaders,’ ‘artists,’ ‘heroes,’ his listing appears under ‘thinkers’. In the Encyclopedia Britannica, Lanier is considered one of history’s 300 greatest inventors.

In terms of firsts, Moondust is considered the world’s first art video game. It is also the first interactive electronic music publication. It was designed for the Commodore 64, one of the earliest personal computers to be used in the home, and the game’s creator, Jaron Lanier, went on to popularise term ‘virtual reality’ in relation to immersive computer generated environments. The success of Moondust enabled Lanier to establish his own company VPL Research which went on to commercially introduce immersive reality products.

According to Stanford University, as a computer visionary Lanier’s list of firsts extend to creating:

“the first ‘avatar’ for network communications, the first moving camera virtual set for television production, and the first performance animation for 3D computer graphics. He was the first to propose web-based network computers. He was one of the originators of real-time surgical simulation and tele-surgery... and a pioneer in the field of visual programming.”

Moondust is playful, a combination of mathematics, colour, musical improvisation and ephemeral data. It is both ambient and mesmerizing. The digital data and sounds are fleeting, changing with each new player
Jaron Lanier (USA)

Moondust, (1983), computer game for Commodore 64

within a parameter of equations and conditions set up when the game was developed. Being the oldest work in the show, it has dated—and in some ways is a reflection of the technological limitations of its time. By comparison, other games in the exhibition like CuteXdoom II or The Path show how far ‘art’ games have come with advances in technology.

The work’s title Moondust suggests something other-worldly, although given the legacy of Space Invaders, that concept is not unfamiliar to the world of gaming.

Its connection for Lanier here may be less than other-worldly and more about the properties of the thing itself as lunar dust is known for its electrical charge. The game displays a sense of fun with the levels of play listed as: “beginner, evasive, freestyle and spinsanity!” Points tally as you progress through the game as patterns and colours form. The game has a life of its own and, without a definitive line of narrative, it shifts the work into the realm of ‘art’ rather than ‘video game’.

Questions for Discussion

1. Look at other art works created by Lanier such as Video Feedback Waterbed and the Time Accelerated Painting, Brooklyn Bridge NY and compare to Moondust. How have the ideas shifted in each work with the passing of time and the arrival of new technologies?

2. The game Moondust was created in 1983 and experiments with both art and music. Do a timeline search of the year and create a visual diary of the year 1983, with images including music, fashion, art, performance and world events. Use it as the source for developing an artwork.

3. Its maker Jaron Lanier has recently been listed as a ‘Thinker’ in Time Magazine. Nam June Paik is considered the ‘father of video art’. Consider the famous sculpture of The Thinker by Rodin and its reworking The Thinker-TV Rodin by Nam June Paik, 1976-78.

4. Play Jaron Larnier’s Moondust, 1983 and Andy Deck’s Space Invaders Act 1732, 1995 and compare the changes in the two games with the difference of 12 years.

5. The work explores the unexpected ephemerality of digital data. Compare and contrast the work with other examples of ephemeral art work. Think about the ephemeral in, for example: Martin Creed’s Turner Prize winning work of 2001 entitled The Lights Going On and Off; works by Wolfgang Laib and Andy Goldsworthy; the unexpected in Paul Sermon’s virtual reality work Telematic Dreaming, 1992; or Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s work Vectorial Elevation (Relational Architecture #4), 2002 which consisted of robotically controlled lights subject to the whimsy of visitors over the internet.

6. Moondust has an abstract ambient electronic score. Lanier as a musician has performed with artists such as Philip Glass and experimented with virtual reality in musical stage performance. Compare Lanier to artists who have worked across the genres of art and music, such as Laurie Anderson.

7. As Lanier is a pioneer of virtual reality consider other artists who work in this field such as: Jeffrey Shaw’s The Legible City, 1989 and The Golden Calf, 1994; Stelarc’s Prosthetic Head, 2003; and Michael Naimark’s Be Now Here, 1995-7. Consider the artist’s intention and how the technology conveys the message in the work.

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Laurie Anderson (USA) with Hsin-Chien Huang (Taiwan)

Puppet Motel, (1995), CD-ROM

Artwork and Influences

Laurie Anderson almost defies definition. She could be described as a performance artist, musician, multimedia artist, curator, cultural producer, sound artist, new media artist, story teller, script writer, set designer, novelist, poet, comic, cultural commentator, composer, electronics whiz, vocalist, and instrumentalist. In all these roles she represents what it means to be an artist of the 21st Century.

Puppet Motel is an interactive CD-ROM produced in the 90s—a relatively new medium at the time that had the ability to play full motion video and high quality audio. As an interactive piece, it presents a multimedia perspective on the artist and her practice with work samples including a book of illustrations from 1971 and a range of surreal juxtapositions of imagery, animation and sound that lead you to various parts of the game. Puppet Motel is a place to spend time rather than 'play' (although there is a small side show alley shoot em' up element where you can shoot a line of ducks)—it is about exploring, waiting, looking, thinking, listening, considering. The artist herself appears many times, and in different guises. Although seemingly dark in tone the humour adds a playful and surprising element to the work.

Laurie Anderson collaborated with new media artist and designer Hsin-Chien Huang to realize the imaginary world in Puppet Motel. The digital design has surreal elements including a stage set that was realized in her 1995 multimedia performance The Nerve Bible. You move from room to room via the power points and can pose questions to the ouija floor.

Hsin-Chien Huang works across digital technologies and traditional art. According to his website he is a “surrealist and coder in the field of new media art.” Returning to Taiwan from the US in 2001 he created Storynest, a team of creative collaborators that supports his new media art
Laurie Anderson (USA) with Hsin-Chien Huang (Taiwan)

Puppet Motel, (1995), CD-ROM

development and work in storytelling, web art, performing art, installations, interactive and public art projects. His work Passage from 2005 invites viewers to interact using their bodies, with the screen projection of city buildings. By lifting an arm, the buildings crumble. His work Listening, a public art project in 2010, features two immense ears measuring 6m x 3m x 15m, made from patterned laser cut stainless steel. In between is a platform where pedestrians can stand and listen. The sculpture is also an access point to watch related video works using QR codes on the ground and internet enabled mobile phones. In these examples the spectacle, transformation, imagination and interactivity are a major part of the work, not unlike Puppet Motel.

The legacy of Minimalism, Happenings, Conceptual art and Performance art in the 1960s and 70s—through to Nam June Paik and his experiments in video art, and John Cage and his composition 4’33”—all provide a context for the emergence of artists such as Laurie Anderson.

Anderson is one of the few Performance Artists who managed to bring performance art to the masses. O Superman, 1981 became a hit in the UK and Anderson was signed to Warner Brothers. The song, with its seductive rhythms, contrasted to the fear, humour and robotic apocalyptic content in the lyrics. Duets on Ice was an early performance art work from 1975 which involved Anderson playing a programmed violin in the streets whilst wearing skates that were frozen in two blocks of ice. The music played on a loop and the piece was over once the ice melted. Unlike Van Gogh from 1977 involved subverting newspaper reviews by including the line “like Van Gogh” in every exhibition review. Eventually addressed by an editor, Anderson revised the phrase to “unlike Van Gogh...” These examples attest to the humour and cross-pollination of ideas and media present in much of Anderson’s work including Puppet Motel.

Questions for Discussion

1. Find examples of at least four works by Laurie Anderson online (Try ubuweb or youtube). Include her hit tunes Language is a Virus and O Superman. Ask students to respond intutively to the works by recording thoughts, comments, and anecdotes on a page. Swap the pages, ask students to convey to the group the most interesting point on their page. Encourage discussion.

2. This quote serendipitously appeared on a restroom door in Newcastle, NSW, May 2010: “I have learnt everything about life from a computer game. Discuss.” Consider this quote in relation to the work Puppet Motel and other artist computer games in the show. Create a word web of ideas that emerge.

3. Compare and contrast the work of the performance artists Marina Abramović, Vito Acconci and Laurie Anderson.

4. Research Happenings and consider their connection to the work of Laurie Anderson.

5. Laurie Anderson comes from a New York art scene where celebrity is part of the equation. Explore the positive and negative impacts of the artist as celebrity including artists from the latter half of the twentieth century to the present, not limited to the USA.


7. Other works by Laurie Anderson include sound pieces such as The Pillow, 1977, and performances including United States 1-4, 1983 and The End of the Moon in 2004, developed whilst artist in residence for NASA. Explore each of these works. What role does narrative play in the works?

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Andy Deck (USA)
Space Invaders Act 1732, (1994), online game

Artwork and Influences

Andy Deck is a politically active artist who works across collaboration, net art, interactive media and software art. Deck is interested in collective activism in questioning the powers that be and Space Invaders Act 1732 from 1995 does just this.

While the internet is hailed as a network 'for the people' only a quarter of the world is actually connected to it. It mimics the real world where major corporations and e-commerce dominate, something not missed by Deck. On his website, Deck refers to control of the internet, particularly in relation to accessing the program Java, needed to play Space Invaders Act 1732. The medium is the message here; Deck forces the audience to discover the power structures online via the platform of playing the game. So too the actual content of the game. Deck has used appropriated legislation passed in the US in 1993 that prohibited companies from erecting billboards in space. Fortunately the Honorable Mr Markey, a member of congress at the time, made a compelling argument:

“What will our world be like if Space Marketing Inc., the Georgia-based company seeking to launch mile-long billboards made from mylar sheets into low Earth orbit, has its way? Children will learn a new nursery rhyme: ‘hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the mylar.’ They will make a wish upon a falling billboard.”

The game provides the transcript from the House of Representatives, Thursday, July 1, 1993 and logos of multinational corporations connected with sweat shops, child labour, or exploiting the environment. As you shoot the logos of the multinationals with sentence bullets from the text in the original Space Advertising Prohibition Act of 1993, web links appear to direct you to the alternative
Andy Deck (USA)

Space Invaders Act 1732, online game 1994

points of views to those of the corporate world. The game is a playful spin on the original Space Invaders arcade game and invites collaboration. In the online version of Space Invaders Act 1732, visitors were invited to add their own invader by finding a corporate exploiter and a website which represents the opposite point of view or by creating their own website in opposition to a multinational.

Andy Deck’s work is an activist digital art work. Whilst activism in visual arts has had a long history, the Internet as an ‘information highway’ has provided further recent opportunities for artists to disseminate information and reach a wider audience. Hacktivism, tactical media and activism are all part of digital cultures. In some cases, artists use technology to question the impact of new technologies on culture, such as issues of surveillance and privacy. In Deck’s work, he questions the ethics of technology—where having the technology to create billboards in space doesn’t make it necessarily an acceptable thing to do.

Hacktivism, tactical media and activism in digital art are perhaps more closely aligned with street art. This connection is apparent in other works by Andy Deck particularly in his work from 2001 entitled Glyphiti. It is literally an online graffiti wall which changes as both you and other visitors alter the pixels in real time. His website andyland.net entices audiences to literally create their own ‘creative license’—with a cover image of Marcel Duchamp as his alter ego Rose Selavy. Deck’s choice of Duchamp is interesting, as Duchamp was known for postmodern gestures of activism and defiance, not least for exhibiting a urinal in 1917 entitled Fountain, and famously inscribed “R. Mutt”.

Questions for Discussion

1. Research other examples of Activist projects such as: iSee, a web based application that creates maps for users to find routes through the city avoiding the closed circuit televisions entitled “paths of least surveillance”. Or Josh On, They Rule, a website that allows users to click on the briefcase of CEOs to investigate corporate power relationships. Alternatively Jenny Marketou, Be careful who sees you when you dream, 2007, involving a spectacle of large red helium balloons exploring the darkness of surveillance with an aesthetic playfulness.

2. Andy Deck participated in an Art & Activism exhibition held in Sweden in 2006 at Mejan Labs. Explore the range of work in the exhibition to further an understanding of digital art.

3. Space Invaders was an arcade video game released in 1978. Find the free version online and ask students to consider why it became so popular. Look at the imagery in the original and consider what twists Deck has made in his work to alter the meaning from the original game?

4. Find a political issue pertinent to students. Find a reference from popular culture and merge the two ideas to reflect a new meaning on the issue. Create a new media work or mixed media work in response.

5. Explore the artist’s website to build a greater understanding of the artist’s body of work. Interact with his Glyphiti wall, create your own Artistic License, and explore the links to other works. Then discuss the key issues explored by Deck and ask students to make comparisons with other artists they have studied.

6. Consider the use of humour in the artist’s work and find other examples of works which make you laugh! How does a comic element add to the experience as an audience?

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On Net Art & Activism:
http://www.crumbweb.org/getInterviewDetail.php?op=3&sublink=&id=3&fromSearch=1

In fact, outside of the gallery space you may wish to try a different browser like Firefox or other to access the game.

2 http://artcontext.org/act/97/space/public/SpaceAdProh.html
Artwork and Influences

“I do not like brutality, and therefore I’m not going into it. And I like nature, which is visible from my work. I also like the old machines that have ceased to serve and slowly disintegrate and return to nature”—Jakub Dvorský

When Dvorský completed his thesis project Samorost at the Academy of Arts in Prague, he could hardly have imagined the worldwide acclaim that the game would receive when it was published on the web. This surreal animated adventure featuring beautifully constructed objects from photographs of wood, moss and rusty parts of old machines, captivated audiences as they helped a gnome divert the collision course of a large spaceship and his home planet.

The game play is a series of interactive vignettes, puzzles and brain teasers that must be solved in order to progress and advance the plot, all immaculately constructed and accompanied by a whimsical soundtrack.

Jakub Dvorský is a Czech artist and designer, based in Brno. He completed his thesis project at the Academy of Arts in Prague by creating a free online flash game called Samorost, a point and click game which was highly acclaimed for its originality and exquisite artwork. He established Amanita Design, a studio developing more online games including Machinarium and Botanicula which was recently released for the iPad. He also worked on the animated film Kooky for which was chosen as the Czech entry for the 45th International Film Festival in Karlovy Vary.
Questions for Discussion

1. *Samorost* presents surrealistic organic scenarios, that mix both natural and technological concepts. Research Surrealism as a movement, with particular reference to Andre Breton and social theories. Are any of these philosophies present in Dvorský’s work?

2. Dvorský manipulated photographs of small objects to create this work. Try creating a digital montage using scans of found objects. For an extension activity, these can be made into an animation.


4. *Samorost* has a distinctive and memorable score. How does this musical aspect contribute or alter the conceptual meaning or experience of the piece? Research where Dvorský sourced this music. Can its creator/s be considered an artistic collaborator or co-author of *Samorost*? Why/why not?

5. Explore the Amanita Studio website to build a greater understanding of the artist’s body of work. Interact with *Botanicula* the game and *Osada* the interactive music video. Can these be considered artworks too? Why/why not?

6. Log on to Scanlines.net and explore this archive of Australian media art since the 1960’s. Visit Josephine Starrs & Leon Cmielewski’s artist pages to view examples of contemporary Australian artists who explore the gaming genre within their practice. Which other artists have explored the music video and gaming genre around the same point in time?

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Anita Fontaine (Australia) and Mike Pelletier (Canada)

CuteXDoom II, (2008), Computer game/video projection and customized ‘wallpaper’ interior

Artwork and Influences

Anita Fontaine, co-founder of design company Champagne Valentine, has worked on music videos for UK Band Placebo. She produced interactive iPhone products for Miroslaw Balka’s Unilever series at the Tate Modern, 2009–2010. Like many digital artists, she has an occupation within the field of new media as well as creating work for galleries. CuteXDoom II in its title plays with game, computer and popular culture terminology, since acronyms and abbreviation are a stronghold of the web. In the game, the player is doomed for interest in collecting the ‘cute’ Japanese toys and characters.

The work extends beyond the computer terminal where Fontaine uses images and patterns created in the game to decorate the room around the viewer. A luscious and surreal environment envelops the viewer, creating a bridge for engaging in the work in the ‘real’ world. You are physically surrounded by what appears on the screen.

CuteXDoom II follows on from her original work, CuteXDoom—both of which were inspired by the images and objects of kawaii (Japanese aesthetic of ‘cute’) and otaku (which refers to someone with an obsessive interest in computer games and anime). CuteXDoom II continues these themes by further exploring ideas of fan based obsession and fanatical ideologies. In the first game, the scenario revolves around the quasi-religious cult of seeking happiness through the collection of cute material objects. The characters name is Sally Sanrio—Sanrio being the company which created Hello Kitty and is synonymous with ‘cute’ character goods. Since the 1970s, kawaii has become so popular in Japan that many companies create cute mascots and merchandise to promote their product.

In the new version, the main character or avatar has
been poisoned and must find the antidote in the lurid, colourful and fantastical world, expanding on ideas of obsession and fanaticism. The surreal graphics shift and become darker as the story becomes more sinister.

Fontaine has worked in the web based virtual environment Second Life. She is currently working on GPS locative gaming using pocket PCs or iPhones and uses 3D modeling and computer game programming in her work.

Canadian artist, Mik Pelletier works in the realms of new media, digital fabrication, art and technology. His work includes location-based cinema, game modifications, generative artworks and physical installations using rapid-prototyping technologies. His artworks have been featured in numerous exhibitions around the world. He spent five years working with artists, helping them overcome numerous technological hurdles.

Questions for Discussion

1. Fontaine’s game CuteXDoom II presents a kind of ‘Cabinet of Curiosities’. Cross-reference this term with other artists across history who consider this idea. You could consider Kate Rohde as a contemporary example.

2. Fontaine is also creating works for iPhones. Turn on your mobiles! As a class exercise use your mobile phones to create an artwork. Limit the time frame, encourage spontaneity, exercise caution, and publish the results online.

3. Explore one creative idea across more than one medium, (including one new media piece). You could consider creating: a wood block print and a youtube video; a collage, and a sound work; an installation and digital photographs.

4. Fontaine is inspired by kawaii (Japanese aesthetic of ‘cute’) and otaku (fan-based culture of computer games and anime). Refer to the work of photographer Shoichi Aoki, FRUiTS: Tokyo Street Style, a fashion style on the streets of Tokyo and discuss in relation to CuteXDoom II. (see teachers notes online link below)

5. Some information about Anita Fontaine can be found on the Queensland Art Gallery website. Look up further examples of artists working in new media via major public collections and discuss how they challenge or confront through their medium of choice.

6. If you do a web search for the term kawaii more than 9,980,000 results appear. Focus on an image search and ask students to describe the imagery. Create a full list of descriptive words and compare it to the work CuteXDoom II. How similar or different is it?

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Tale of Tales (Belgium)
The Path, (Released: 18 March 2009)
Designed and directed by Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn, Music by Jarboe & Kris Force

Artwork and Influences
Michaël Samyn and Auriea Harvey are digital artists and the creators Tale of Tales, the collaboration behind The Path, an independent video game. It seeks to delve into the psyche of the audience, to challenge, provoke and question—to walk the line between fear and doubt, control and chaos, strength and fragility. The narrative, being non-linear, bypasses the conventional trajectory of a video game and blurs the line between art and video games.

The work has been called a ‘failure game’, a game that is not about winning but rather about ‘the path’—the journey or the process along the way. The name alone, ‘a short horror game’, builds a sense of uncertainty in the player. Engaging in the story and role playing is as much a part of the journey as the ‘action’ of the game. “After all, rushing through is to miss facing the horrors that lie in the forest and, therefore, the point of The Path.” (The Edge Magazine Review)

Their work is nostalgic, emotional, dark, compelling. The Tale of Tales’ blog charts how the pair met virtually, due to a love of the networked computer. Their passionate virtual affair crystallized on meeting in person at the Triton Hotel in San Francisco 1999, a site they chose to launch The Path online ten years later at 9:00pm on 18 March 2009 from their hotel room. The irony here is the intimacy of the digital age—artists exhibiting from their bed and responding as emails flooded in from around the globe, far from the social protocols of one gallery in one city at one time. The work continues and can be purchased online. Using the internet as the platform for releasing their work has enabled them to effectively bypass dealers, galleries and the games industry and be wholly independent operators.

In considering the medium, the artists Samyn and Harvey refer to the idea that their work in creating a video game is closer to architecture than film. "In
The Garden of Forking Paths

Tale of Tales (Belgium)
The Path, (Released: 18 March 2009)
Designed and directed by Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn, Music by Jarboe & Kris Force

architecture you're in the architecture, not just sitting and viewing it. It's about being rather than seeing…” (The Edge Magazine Review). Architecture is also about light, space, enclosure, immersion—something simulated in The Path. They refer to the idea that as digital artists their 'oil on canvas' is realtime 3D, a technology which allows them to say many things simultaneously. This is reflected in the layering collaged immersive environment of the game which presents numerous ideas, suggestions, moods, multiple narratives and multiple readings. The game also operates as an installation, by creating a three dimensional, interactive, immersive, new and imagined environment. Whilst they do work online and in digital media, their work has a handmade quality in the deliberate inclusion of low technology media such as pencil drawings, polaroids, collage as well as a minimum team of collaborators including Canadian artist and typographer Marian Bantjes.

The drawings and music were commissioned for The Path, whilst the models were developed by Auriea Harvey, and Michaël Samyn focused on creating the digital platform for the work. Both digital artists in the Tale of Tales team had careers in net art and web design before shifting their focus to video games. Partially they reused an environment created for an earlier work 'the endless forest'. Some reference points for the look and feel of the game was: 'Pop Surrealism', 'Gothic Lolita', stylish, dark, profound, narrative, and immersive. The soundtrack for The Path is by Jarboe whose music crosses the following genres: post punk, cult rock, experimental fusion, psychedelic folk, gothic and modern blues. She originally performed with The Swans and is now a solo artist. She is an experimental vocalist and also works in live spoken word performance.

As digital artists, Tale of Tales work in a relatively new area, an area continually changing depending on the release of new technology. They also create intimate work for you at home on your PC which shifts in a gallery context, where experiencing their work is a very public one.

Questions for Discussion

1. The Path can be experienced in an intimate way at home on your PC—consider how the work shifts on being presented in a gallery context?

2. The artists liken their work to architecture rather than film. Have a class discussion/debate about this idea. Refer to the contemporary architecture of Frank Gehry such as The Dancing House in Prague or The Experience Music Project (EMP/SFM) in Seattle and compare some of his creations to the immersive environment in The Path.

3. Gerard Byrne is an Irish artist who works in representing historical moments in a contemporary context, appropriating a cultural event or product. Tale of Tales have created an immersive interactive 3D environment around an existing story 'Little Red Riding Hood'. Consider why artists reconstruct cultural histories in contemporary art with reference to Byrne and Tale of Tales and other artists?

4. Neo Goth: Back in Black was an exhibition held in 2008 at University of Queensland Art Museum, which included Patricia Piccinini's work The Gathering. Compare the imagery in The Path with Piccinini's work and discuss the challenges faced by artists working in new media as well as the role of the audience in viewing or experiencing new media works.

5. When is a video game not a video game? Compare and contrast a video game and an art video game. How are they similar and in what ways are they different? Brainstorm as a group, using specific examples.

6. The artists identify themselves as independent gamers and have written a real time Art Manifesto (see: http://tale-of-tales.com/tales/RAM.html). Independent games have also been referred to as Experimental games. How are independent games different from mainstream video games?

Bibliography and References


More works by Tale of Tales can be found on their website

Earlier work by Harvey and Samyn: http://entropy8zuper.org/godlove/memory.html including The Godlove Museum: http://entropy8zuper.org/godlove

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http://www.edge-online.com/features/review-fatale-exploring-salome
Guillaume Reymond (Switzerland)

Game Over, (2005 - 2010),
A series of collaborative stop frame movies which revive some of the very first video games.

Artwork and Influences

GAME OVER is one of the art projects developed by the French-Swiss artist Guillaume Reymond (NOTsoNOISY creative agency). It consists of a series of collaborative animation movies which revive some of the very first video games. The pixels are replaced by a group of real human-beings that are moving from seat to seat in a theatre during about 4 to 6 hours. Each “pixel” has its own rules and decides what s/he wants to do for each picture. Once all these pictures are turned into a short animated movie, a giant human-scale video game unfolds “live”.

1. PONG is the first video performance of the GAME OVER Project and was a test-case aimed at developing the series. Who’s going to win this table tennis game?

2. SPACE INVADERS was shot and played during and for the “Belluard Bollwerk International” festival in the “Espace Nuitbonie” (Fribourg, Switzerland | www.belluard.ch) on June 24th 2006. Will the Earth be invaded by the spaceships?

3. POLE POSITION was shot and played during and for “The game is up!” festival at the Vooruit (Ghent, Belgium | www.vooruit.be) on February 11th 2007. Will the mad racing car avoid the other vehicles on this sinuous road?

4. TETRIS is the 4th video performance of the GAME OVER Project. This stop-motion video was shot and played during the Urbaines Festival (www.urbaines.ch) at the Palais de Rumine (Lausanne, Switzerland) on November 24th 2007.

5. PAC-MAN: This stop-motion video was shot and played for GameCulture (www.gameculture.ch) at the Trafo cinema (Baden, Switzerland) on August 28th 2010.

More info > www.notsonoisy.com
Guillaume Reymond (Switzerland)

Game Over, (2005 - 2010),
A series of collaborative stop frame movies which revive some of the very first video games

Questions for Discussion

1. French-Swiss artist Guillaume Reymond works under the auspices of NOTsoNOISY creative agency. Log onto his website and explore his oeuvre. What is the relationship between the artist and this commercial enterprise? Can all of his creative output be considered as fine art, despite NOTsoNOISY’s commercial origins as a graphic design agency? Pay particular attention to the ‘Video-performances’ section on the homepage. Have a class discussion, ask students to identify the artworks and list reasoning for their choices on the board.

2. Watch the ‘Press Video’ by Sarah Hofmann dated 3 August 2011 on the artists website. Reymond has used stop-motion to create the GAME OVER series. Set up the classroom using a video camera and rows of chairs behind desks, ask students to wear different coloured t-shirts. Following Reymond’s method in the video, re-stage his work Tetris. Introduce stop-motion animation techniques.

1. The artist collaborates with many people to realise GAME OVER. Do the subjects use their own individual agency in the works to decide how they move, influencing each frame aesthetically, or does the artist direct them? Are these people subjects of the artwork or can they be considered artistic collaborators? Discuss artistic intention.

2. Research ‘Participatory Culture’. How has an online participatory culture removed barriers to making art? What other types of creative activity are part of participatory culture? Learn about zines and ask students to create an artistic zine of their own, either hard copy or using a Web 2.0 digital platform such as ISSUU.

Bibliography and References

Artist website: http://www.notsonoisy.com/
Andrew Burrell and Chris Rodley (Australia)
B.E.T.T.Y 2.0 (2014)
Interactive installation incorporating real-time network data

Artwork and Influences

Andrew Burrell is a contemporary arts practitioner with a long history in real time 3d and interactive audio installation. He is exploring notions of self and narrative and the implications of virtual worlds, networked environments and artificial life systems upon identity. He holds a PhD from the University of Sydney.

Chris Rodley is a writer for new and old media whose work is exploring emerging frontiers for the literary in networked spaces. He is currently focused on writing for new media installations, while past projects include writing for web, television and live performance. Chris is a PhD candidate in Digital Cultures at the University of Sydney, where he is exploring the impact of Big Data on poetics.

For over two years, Andrew and Chris's collaborative practice has focused on live storytelling using big data in a series of media art collaborations. They include the public art installation Enquire Within Upon Everybody, presented simultaneously in Sydney and Darwin as part of ISEA2013; the real-time Twitter play Everything Is Going To Be OK ;, a large-scale installation presented at Underbelly Arts Festival (Sydney), Carriageworks (Sydney), and the Electronic Literature Organization Media Arts Show (Milwaukee, USA); Data Fiction v0.1, presented at Electrofringe (Newcastle, NSW). B.E.T.T.Y was a new media installation for the Art Gallery of New South Wales Society Contempo series exhibition Electroscape: the here and now of digital art in February 2014.

When ELIZA, the world’s first chatbot, was born in the 1960s, users were startled at how much the Rogerian psychotherapist in the program resembled a human. Since then, chatbots have become increasingly sophisticated; some claim they will soon pass the Turing test for successfully impersonating a human, or even that the famous test has already been passed. But in the age of Big Data, does it make sense to say that bots are imitating us? Many already are us, constituted from the thoughts and emotions we share every day online.

B.E.T.T.Y 2.0 seeks to draw attention to the ghost in the machine of AI – the humans who unwittingly control the Wizard of Oz from behind the curtain, and crouch inside the Mechanical Turk. Audience members are invited to share their private thoughts with an entity created by data-mining millions of social media messages in real time. Is artificial intelligence really so artificial after all? And do these cyborgian interlocutors lend us an empathetic ear, or cold comfort?
The Garden of Forking Paths

Andrew Burrell and Chris Rodley (Australia)
B.E.T.T.Y 2.0 (2014)
Interactive installation incorporating real-time network data

Questions for Discussion

1. Source Alan Turing’s 1950 paper ‘Computing Machinery and Intelligence’ and ask students to read it or a synopsis. Apply the Turing Test to B.E.T.T.Y 2.0. What other forms of artificial intelligence can students identify in their everyday lives? Do they meet the Turing standard?

2. During June 2013 Australia hosted the 19th edition of I.S.E.A: an international symposium of experimental art, which Burrell & Rodley participated in. Ask students to explore the I.S.E.A website. What is the role of arts festivals in creating a cultural ‘scene’? Discuss how exchange and dialogue are important to cultural production.

3. What is a chatbot? Research ELIZA, a historic machine that inspired the artists to make B.E.T.T.Y. Burrell & Rodley compare it to the computer in ‘The Wizard of Oz’. Find other examples of how technology has been fictionalised in literature and film.

4. Ask students to collate Twitter and Facebook data from their own social media accounts. What observations can they draw from data and dialogue there? Ask them to create their very own digital or object-based artwork using this subject matter and imagery.

5. Art can be a catalyst for discussion of issues and ideas. ‘Big Data’ is referenced by the creators of B.E.T.T.Y 2.0 in their artist statement. The collection of personal data by the government and the private sector is a contentious current affairs issue in Australia. Ask students to collect media articles on this topic and write a report on how Big Data is being used.

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http://chrisrodley.com/2014/02/25/b-e-t-t-y/
http://www.ieea.org/
http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032138/

http://theconversation.com/au/topics/big-data
David O’Reilly (Ireland/USA)

Mountian (2014) PC/Mac/iOS/Android game
Character Mirror (2014), PC/Mac with Oculus Rift VR Headset

Artwork and Influences

David O’Reilly is a filmmaker and artist based in Los Angeles. Creator of the influential short films 'Please Say Something' and 'The External World', his animation work has garnered over 80 awards including Berlin’s Golden Bear, the Cartoon D’Or and awards at Sundance and the Venice Film Festival. In 2012 he wrote, directed and produced a special for Cartoon Network’s Emmy Award-winning show ‘Adventure Time’, he more recently created fictional video games in Spike Jonze’s Academy Award winning film ‘Her’.

Mountain is the first game he created, released in July 2014 and has caused quite a stir in the press and gaming community. Described by some as an ‘anti-game’, it boasts an unusual array of features including ‘no controls, time moves forward, things grow and things die, nature expresses itself, ~ 50 hours of gameplay, once generated, you cannot be regenerated’

Mountain begins with a series of single word questions, asking the viewer to respond by drawing something and on completion, the mountain is generated.

And there it sits, gently rotating in space as night falls, dawn breaks and clouds, rain and snow drift across, accompanied by gentle atmospheric sounds and musical interludes. Mysteriously bizarre objects fall from the space.

Character Mirror is David O’Reilly’s first foray into use of the Oculus Rift VR headset, a very simple piece that simply shows your reflection in a virtual mirror as if you were one of the 3D characters from his delightfully absurd 2011 Film ‘The External World’. Turn away from the mirror and back and you shape shift into another form.

With Sony and other electronics manufacturers also planning to release consumer level VR headsets for gamers in the near future, O’Reilly’s playful use of the Oculus development release is a wonderfully playful alternative to a future that is sure to be filled with the ubiquitous gore of first person shooters.

Credits: David O’Reilly - Creator, Design, Damien Di Fede - Code, Sound
Questions for Discussion

1. *Mountain* has been termed an ‘anti-game’. What features of a game might be considered standard? Identify which features of this game might be considered oppositional to conventional gaming formats, besides “no controls”.

2. Curator Neil Jenkins has compared *Mountain* to the Tamagochi. Invented by Akihiro Yokoi and released commercially as a toy in 1996, the Tamagochi was a digital pet based on a miniatative, egg-shaped handheld computer. Its international popularity reached ‘craze’ status during the 1990’s. Look at how the tamagochi was adapted for other game platforms, such as the iPad and compare these to the experience offered by O’Reilly’s *Mountain*.

3. Time is an important subject matter in *Mountain*. Discuss how the element of time is a component of moving image platforms such as games, films and video art. Discuss the term ‘time-based artwork’. How might this be different to ‘new media art’?

4. *Character Mirror* is a playful take on the Oculus Rift headwear. The Oculus Rift is a Virtual Reality (VR) headset designed for 3D gaming. Invented in 2012, it will be released for consumers during 2015. Find examples of other games that have been recently developed for this technology. Compare these commercial games to the artwork and discover how O’Reilly has purposed the latest gaming technology as an artistic tool.

5. View a short excerpt of O’Reilly’s 2011 film ‘The External World’. The characters in this animation appear in *Character Mirror*. The film was banned from exhibition in China by Shanghai’s Ministry of Culture. Discuss censorship and artistic freedom.* contains adult themes

6. Consider whether O’Reilly’s film ‘The External World’ can also be classified as an artwork. In the digital age, many creative works are interdisciplinary, referencing many times of visual culture and traditions such as cinema and gaming. Are classifying terms such as ‘film’, ‘game’, and ‘artwork’ still relevant?

Bibliography and References

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http://mashable.com/2014/02/20/tamagotchi-friends/
http://www.davidoreilly.com/projects/character-mirror/
http://www.davidoreilly.com/films/the-external-world/
## Timeline
### Key Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Jorge Luis Borges publishes <em>The Garden of Forking Paths</em> considered by many to be the first hypertext novel (prior to the existence of the web and the first digital computer). A labyrinthine story with multiple layers and multiple readings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>Konrad Zuse creates one of the first computers the Z3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>First computer in Australia (the 4th in the world).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Colour Television introduced in the US.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>DNA discovered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>The term 'Pop Art' is used by a British critic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>First Video tape recorder is produced with the price of $50,000.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td><em>Spacewar</em>., the world’s first video game is developed by Steve Russell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Berlin Wall built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>The first computer mouse developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>US Sends troops to Vietnam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Nam June Paik uses the newly released Sony portapak video recorder to create the first video art work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>The first computer art exhibition is held at Technische Hochschule, Stuttgart.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td><em>Star Trek</em> TV series begins and <em>Odyssey</em> is developed by Ralph Baer who proposed the use of a TV set for playing computer games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Pruitt-Igoe housing project demolished marking the rise of postmodernism and the end of modernism in architecture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td><em>Pong</em> one of the earliest arcade video games.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td><em>Space Invaders</em> released.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>First consumer computers available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Microsoft founded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Colour TV introduced in Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Apple computer founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td><em>Stayin' Alive</em> by The Bee Gees hits no.1 on the charts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>First Test tube baby born.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>The Sony Walkman is released.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td><em>Pac-Man</em> released.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>IBM introduces first IBM Personal computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>The Commodore 64 arrives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td><em>Moondust</em> by Jaron Lanier the first art video game is produced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Guerrilla Girls established challenging male dominated artworld.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Andy Warhol uses Amiga to create a self portrait and portrait of Deborah Harry from Blondie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>The world wide web arrives and first internet banking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Global Positioning System is launched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Internet Explorer 2.0 is launched and Sony Playstation introduced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Cracking the Maze</em> art games exhibition curated by Anne-Marie Schleiner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Rhizome.org founded: an online archive of new media art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Microsoft Xbox and Nintendo’s GameCube games consoles are released.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Two planes fly into the World Trade Center. Beginning the ‘War on Terror’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Launch of Facebook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>YouTube begins with up to 65 000 videos uploaded every day.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Twitter launched.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Apple iPhone released.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Global Financial Crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Apple iPad released.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Julia Gillard becomes Australia’s first female Prime Minister.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The Garden of Forking Paths

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