

## GAME THEORY

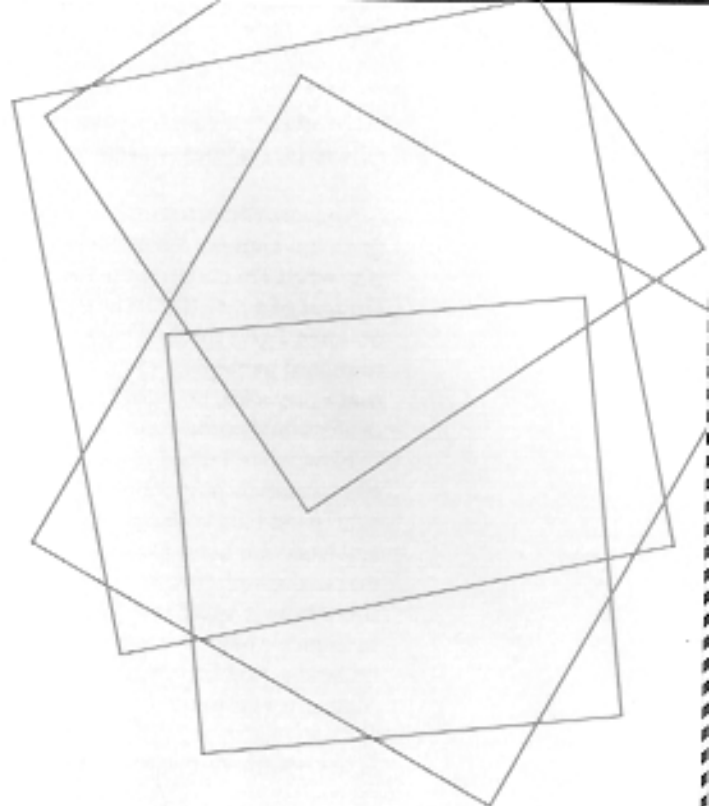
In video game art curator *Isabelle Arvers'* world, borders are being abolished left, right and centre. The future of mash-ups is bright.

The history of video games is closely connected with 'doing things you're not supposed to' with technology – something we're particularly excited about at *Hack Circus*. Is it this opportunity for subverting intended use that particularly appeals?

The history of games almost begins with subversion. *Space War*, one of the first computer games, was a hack developed by computer scientists at MIT. 20 years later, the demo scene began with gamers hacking cartridges to put their names in the intro credits. Machinima – developing cinematic ideas in virtual worlds – evolved from this; another diversion from the original purpose of video games.

I became interested in computer games in the late 90s. It was such a powerful way of manipulating people's minds – especially in the hands of big companies who were producing and marketing triple A games. So I decided that we – curators, critics etc – had to promote alternative and artistic uses of video games, and to distribute other types of games: experimental, strange productions...

I'm really happy to see this becoming a 'trend'. I always enjoyed reverse engineering tech, and the situationist notion of *détournement*. It runs in the family. My grandfather was an anarchist and libertarian and my father was born in South Tunisia and had to do everything by himself: shoes, glasses, clothes, etc. He was so against the consumerist society that he got me into DIY very early! Anyway, that's what I like in DIY: 8-bit music, machinima, weird games. They transform mass consumables into a mode of expression.



How do you think developments in technology will change the face of 'video game art' in the next 15 years?

In 40 years, games became hyper-realistic – somehow untrue – and more about graphic design than game play. There's reaction against this now, a sense that commercial games don't reflect diversity or express anything like the possible range of subjects. More and more tools, like *Game Maker*, *Construct*, *Unity*, are accessible to developers, artists and game designers. Tools like *Mikey Mikey* and *Arduino* suggest yet more possibilities for interested amateurs.

So I don't know what will happen in the next 15 years. I see what is happening now in the games and art scene, though: more and more art is being produced using games. Equally, more and more developers and game designers are producing unfinished or imperfect creations through game jams, bundles, and places like *Baby Castle* and *Game Labs* in LA.

With platforms like *Steam* promoting them, the backing of high street vendors is no longer needed. So we have game-like art and artistic games enjoying online distribution – it's the dawn of a new era! ▶

I love the energy of this low-tech sound and its artists. It's funny how this movement has come to be associated with nudity. I don't know how it began or why, but some musicians always seem to finish their gig naked, completely comfortable in front of an audience eating strawberries.

Why do you think it's important to look differently at 8-bit graphics and sound? What are the benefits to deconstructing these things, and examining the details as artistic creations?

the more a game pushes me out of my room and towards other people, the more I enjoy it.

What do borders mean for people without the right papers? I wanted visitors to get a feel for this. Art gives consciousness and experience to ideas. It actually makes them less abstract, allowing us to make sense of the spectacle through our bodies and placing ourselves in context.

My work is all about crossing boundaries and trying to bridge creative universes. My background in political sciences helped me to understand epistemology, and I think that's why *antitax* is such a fulfilling project for me. Actually, we are now working on a new project: a paper publication and online experimental art and research review. The mix must go on!

Yes, thanks to the indie and experimental game scene, but in the mainstream market too. New consoles and new platforms changed the way people play and also who is playing video

and computer games (adults, women, seniors, etc). The new Oculus Rift or Sifco Cubes open up new possibilities of merging games with physical experience. Personally, what interests me most are the physical games like *Foot* or the created by Blast Theory. These pervasive games like the ones towards other people, the more I enjoy it.

Our relationship with gaming changing? Vancouver from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of August. will be held at the Centre for Digital Media in to immerse ourselves again. This exhibition will them how it was to play at the time, we need to immerse the audience in these games, and show and Malcolm Levy, *Evolution*. As we want to immerse the audience in these games, and show exhibition I am co-curating with Kimberly Voll retrogames to prepare for the next retrogaming Now, when I can, I play emulated versions of professional context.

That I play a lot, but most of the time it is in a to record gameplay, you need to play. It means or when I give machinima workshops because I'm part of a jury (for indie games or in schools). play when I'm curating a game exhibition, when this a lot. I am not a hardcore gamer. I generally Ahahah, this question! It's funny, I get asked

You're clearly a very busy person. Do you find time to play games yourself?

*"The more a game pushes me out of my room and towards other people, the more I enjoy it"*

going on. The *Papavasi* boots by Ken Rinaldo or *Fingerprint Maze* by Amy Franceschini allow people to get a taste for a world of perpetual surveillance. Claude Chazet's beautiful work X-ray shows us what industrial scanners see when they pick up migrants hidden inside trucks.

What do borders mean for people without the right papers? I wanted visitors to get a feel for this. Art gives consciousness and experience to ideas. It actually makes them less abstract, allowing us to make sense of the spectacle through our bodies and placing ourselves in context.

My work is all about crossing boundaries and trying to bridge creative universes. My background in political sciences helped me to understand epistemology, and I think that's why *antitax* is such a fulfilling project for me. Actually, we are now working on a new project: a paper publication and online experimental art and research review. The mix must go on!

Tell us about *antitax*. What was the thinking behind the project?

It began with the artist Heath Bunting inviting me to a dinner where I met researchers - geographers, anthropologists, sociologists, etc - who were looking for a curator for an exhibition that would diffuse three years of seminars about mutations of borders. The project was a joint initiative of the Mediterranean Institute for Advanced Research and the Superior Art School of Aix-en-Provence.