# Non-linear Games && Games as Art:

- Early forms of play and games
- Cultural analysis of games
- Representation in games
- Impact of games on social interactions and relationships



LEECHBOWL, Kitty Horrorshow, 2016

# "LUDIFICATION" and/or GAMIFICATION:

How is a game like/not like a book?

When is a book a game?

When is a performance a game?

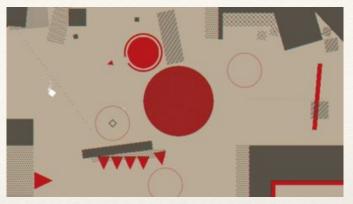
What is meaningful interactivity?

In 2012 John Sharp wrote an essay titled "The Curiously Short History of Game Art." Sharp describes three communities of practice and offers case studies for each.

"Game Art," which includes such artists as Cory Arcangel and JODI, treats video games as a form of popular culture from which can be borrowed subject matter, tools, and processes.

"Artgames," created by gamemakers including Jason Rohrer, Brenda Romero, and Jonathan Blow, explore territory usually occupied by poetry, painting, literature, or film.

Finally, "Artists' Games"—with artists including Blast Theory—represents a more synthetic conception of games as an artistic medium. The work of these gamemakers, Sharp suggests, shows that it is possible to create game-based artworks that satisfy the aesthetic and critical values of both the contemporary art and game communities.



Connor McCann, Rotor, 2017



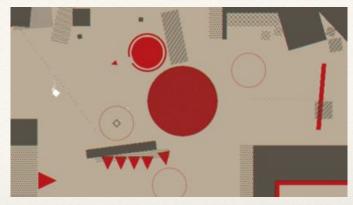
Braid, Number None, 2008

John Sharp, Works of Game: On the Aesthetics of Games and Art, MIT Press, 2015

John Sharp, "The Curiously Short History of Game Art," 2012

3 Designations/Communities of Practice:

- 1) GAME ART
- 2) "ARTGAMES"
- 3) ARTISTS' GAMES



Connor McCann, Rotor, 2017



Braid, Number None, 2008



The Crossing, Bill Viola, 1996



Night Journey, Bill Viola and Tracy Fullerton, 2007



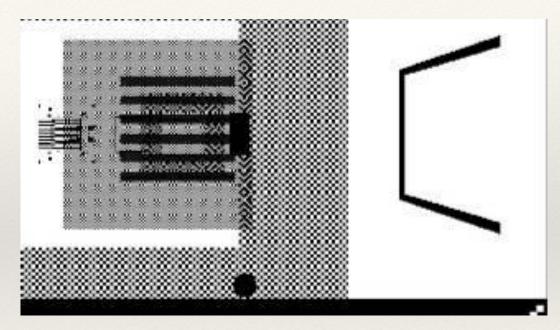
Figure 1.1
Installation view of *The Night Journey* in the Museum of the Moving Image exhibition "Virtual Reality." Courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image. Photograph by David Love.

#### **Game Art**

Appropriating the tools of video games to create art.

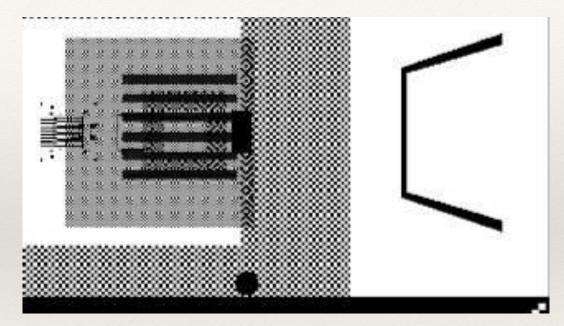
#### Examples:

Night Journey, Bill Viola and Tracy Fullerton Myfawny Ashmore Cory Arcangel JODI



SOD, JODI (Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans), 1999

SOD is an extreme modification or "hack" of id Software's action game Wolfenstein 3D, in which the goal was to escape from a Nazi dungeon. In SOD, Wolfenstein 3D's representational renderings (considered state-of-the art at the time of the game's release in 1992) have been replaced by pure geometrical forms in a limited palette of black, white and gray. The result is a game space that is loosely architectural and extremely disorienting; it is easy to get lost, and it can be difficult to distinguish the walls from the targets one is supposed to shoot.



SOD, JODI (Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans), 1999



Myfawny Ashmore, *Mario Battle no. 1*, from *Super Mario Bros. Trilogy*, 2000 https://vimeo.com/212974441

"Mario travels through a world devoid of enemies, power ups, coins, and environmental obstacles. All that is left for Mario to do is travel along the platform; he can run, he can jump, but without resistance beyond the timer, Mario only passes time until his death. In Mario Doing Time (2004), the second work in the trilogy, Mario again finds himself in a world that lacks the typical goals and resistance. This time, however, Ashmore has extended the wall behind Mario to a height that imprisons the little fellow. And so, he can once more walk and jump, but only in an incarcerated futility as the timer counts down to his death."

Sharp, 2015







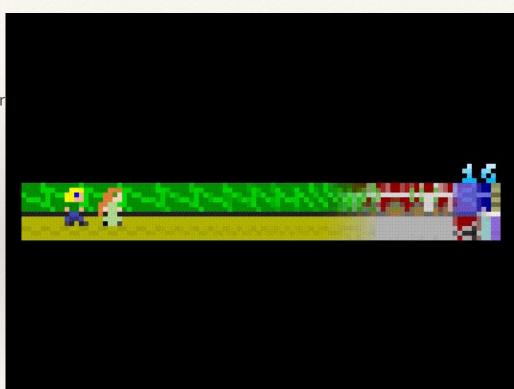
#### **Artgames**

What is an "art game"? How does it differ from other games?

Examples of Artists:

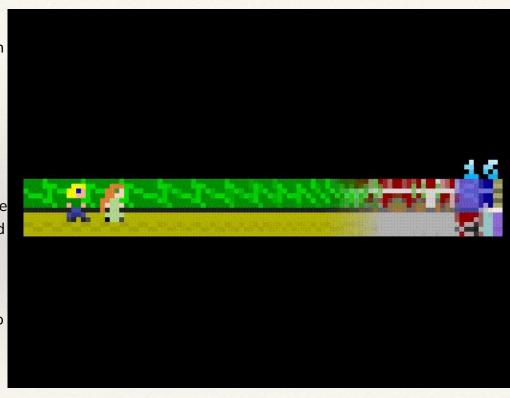
Jason Rohrer, Brenda Romero, Jonathan Blow

John Sharp, 2012

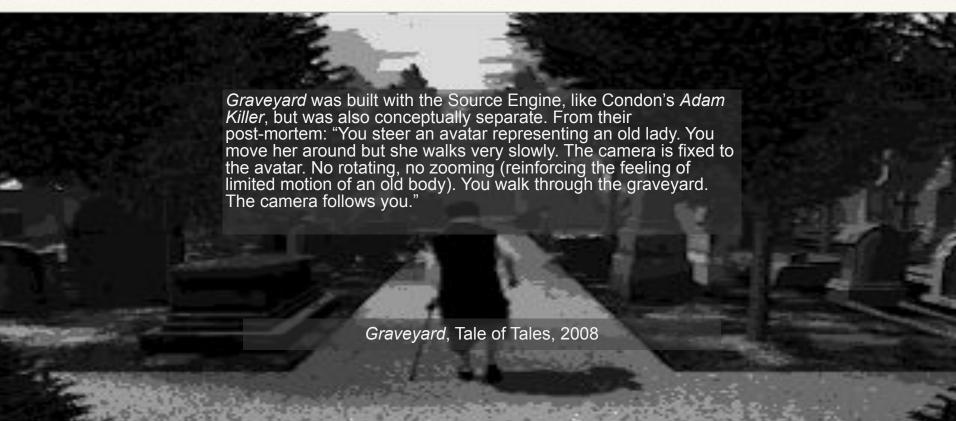


Passage takes only a few minutes to play. It is a side-scroller in which players control a male avatar that can move from left to right as time progresses. There are no instructions. The environment is a 2D maze with treasure chests scattered throughout, some in relatively hard to reach places. Points are earned for collecting these chests. After a short time, the player will encounter a female character who will marry the protagonist if touched; this choice, however, will increase the difficulty of navigating the maze, as the female will begin to accompany the player and restrict certain avenues of movement.

As the game progresses, the avatar's relative position on the screen gradually shifts to the right, with less visibility to the right and more visibility to the left. The speed of the player also slows as time progresses, and the representation of both the avatar and the wife visibly age.





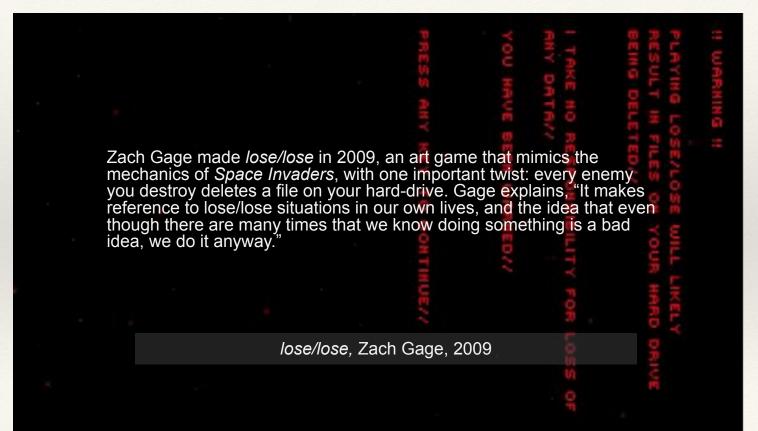


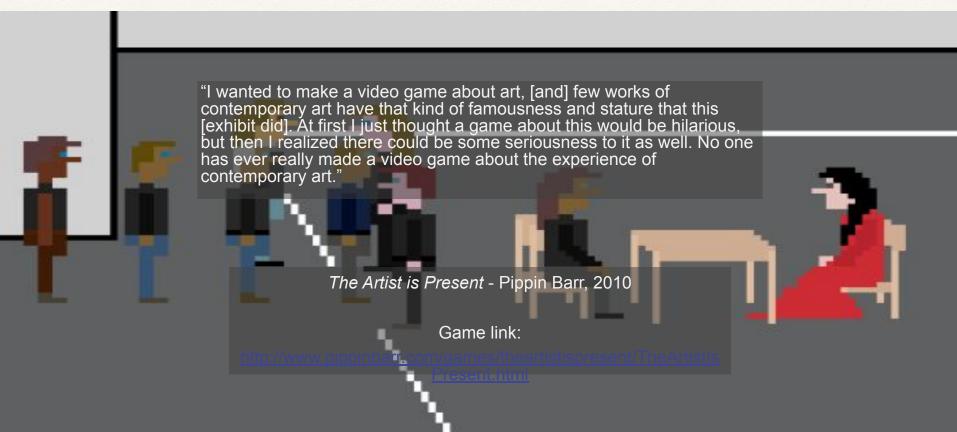
"In a modified version of a popular online wargame, two opposing teams of self-actuating firearms struggle for dominion over a dusty town somewhere in the Middle East.

"The media presents war in simplistic terms: soldiers on either side of a conflict are either exalted as heroes or vilified as "the enemy." Video games echo these harsh divisions in the way they differentiate between teams, allowing players to make split-second decisions about who they should be shooting.

"When the uniforms and identifying features of combatants are stripped away, however, lines of division disappear, and determining the alignment of each combatant becomes impossible; the soldiers are reduced to weapons, wielded against one another."

Dust2Dust, Kent Sheely, 2008 https://vimeo.com/48340352

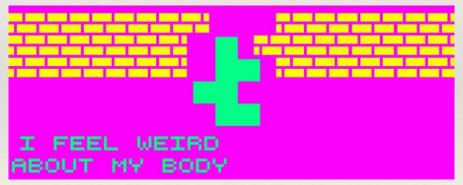








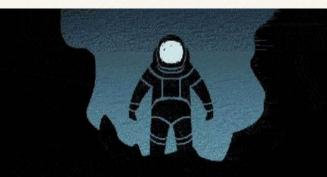




Screenshots from Dys4ia, Anna Anthropy

Lifeline (2016) is a text-based adventure game developed by Three Minute Games for iOS and Android. Through a texting conversation between the main character and the player, the player must guide the main character, Taylor, to survive an unknown moon after their space ship crashed.

The prototype of Lifeline was created in Twine.



#### I've been texting with an astronaut

Waiting for a text message has never felt so nerve-wracking

#### by Laura Hudson

"Who are you texting with?" a friend asked as I kept checking my phone at dinner. "An astronaut stranded on another planet," I answered. It was kind of true.

It's the idea behind *Lifeline*, a mobile game that makes you the sole point of contact for the survivor of a spaceship crash. The first time you hear from Taylor, a frightened young student who just emerged from an escape pod in an alien desert, the situation is dire. There's no food,

no water, no way off the surface, and only one person in range to talk to: you.

There are no graphics, either. Instead, you and Taylor communicate through a long series of what are essentially text messages. Your new friend is scared, alone, and uncertain about what to do next, and quickly starts to ask you for advice. Would it be better set out for that mysterious peak in the distance, or camp out the wreckage of the ship?

#### &maybetheywontkillyou (2015)

Akira Thompson is an Iraq War veteran, former Disney Imagineer, and founder of social art creative firm RainBros. Thompson felt frustrated at these pernicious if-onlys, the insidious idea that black behavior must somehow take the lead to save black lives.

One player acts as the "Subject", the other as the "System". The Subject moves one theoretical space at a time, and in each space, the System draws for them a random event card—for example, a car you pass has locked its doors on sight of you. Or a police cruiser catches you in its spotlight. For each event, the player may choose to say nothing, or to speak.



#### And maybe they won't kill you

By Leigh Alexander



As designed systems, games create spaces for people to grasp how infrastructures work, to test theories—and often, to internalize how the systems of our world may not work, may promote inequality. They can be tools to create empathy and reveal injustice, and they can illustrate the often-complicated answers to the "why can't you just" and "if it were me, I wouldn't have" that pervade rhetorical discourse.

As human beings, it is often hard for us to accept that systems are unfair. It is also hard for many of us to want to change unfair systems when their unfairness favors us; we understand logically the disadvantages of others, but we can carry on shrouded comfortably in our denial for as long as we don't have to be confronted with their emotions.

For example: Black Americans are dispro-

#### &maybetheywontkillyou (2015)

Every time the Subject speaks, the System quite literally rolls a die. Whenever the result is higher than "1", the System silently consults the penal code. If the Subject chooses not to speak, their "Frustration" score increases, a number that always gets added to their result against the System. In other words, speaking up for yourself always risks a negative interaction with law enforcement; staying silent just defers that risk to later. The game can end with the Subject making it home safe despite indignities, physically carrying their own Frustration score counter. Or it can end with the Subject dead.

https://rainb.ro/amtwky



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#### **CAN YOU SEE ME** NOW?

Share This

Comments

What do you think?

A game of chase played online and on the streets.

Along with Botfighters, Can You See Me Now? is one of the first location based games. Online players compete against members of Blast Theory on the streets. Tracked by satellites, Blast Theory's runners appear online next to your player on a map of the city. On the streets, handheld computers showing the positions of online players guide the runners in tracking you down.



"A crucial feature of Blast Theory projects is the ability to extend user and audience affect outside the game - rather than delimiting our



LEECHBOWL, Kitty Horrorshow, 2016

"Every house is haunted. Explore a suburban house, collect cassette tapes, study the physiology of domestic architecture."



>\_ANATOMY\_\_\_\_, Kitty Horrorshow, 2016