Non-linear Games && Games as Art:

- Accessible game tools
- Cultural analysis of games
- Representation in games
- Impact of games on social interactions and relationships

LEECHBOWL, Kitty Horrorshow, 2016

WHY TWINE?

Twine's financial and technical accessibility are major reasons for its broad adoption, especially among economically marginalized, nontraditional game designers—i.e., people who are not white men with college-level programming training. As a result, Twine has been the site of an incredible artistic flourishing at the intersections of digital games and fiction: a rebirth of hypertext. People who might never otherwise make a videogame make them with Twine. Some of these people have taken the skills they develop in using Twine and branch out to other forms and media; others have delved deeper into Twine itself and done things with it that nobody expected; and still others use it to make games that tell stories without the intention of becoming a professional artist or designer, just as one might write a poem or take a photo without needing or wanting extensive training in either of those skills. Authors can use Twine to create choose your own adventure

WHY TWINE?

those skills. Authors can use Twine to create choose your own adventure stories, or interactive poetry, or nonlinear essays, or anything composed of sections of text and connections between them. Theoretically, authors could also use a word processor or pen and paper to create those texts. But there's a key difference between traditional writing tools and Twine: Twine simplifies the process of creating digital texts rather than analog ones, and it includes tools that allow Twine authors to conceal the rules and structure of their works from the reader. For example: In a choose-your-own-adventure book, the reader can page through to find the various endings or skip ahead to other segments, and the reader often has to keep track of states relevant to the game (how many weird potions she's carrying, for instance.) Twine keeps track of these states as the author directs, and it doesn't necessarily tell the reader it's doing so. Thus Twine games are often opaque, only revealing their full shapes to the player over the course of the narrative and sometimes not entirely at all.

WHY TWINE?

Thus Twine readers/players can experience a narrative in a way that would be difficult or impossible to reproduce on paper. Twine games can track how long we've lingered on particular decisions, remember the decisions we've made, and shift the later narrative accordingly without our necessarily being able to perceive a direct connection between our actions and the results. Take a game like Gaming Pixie's *Eden*, which mixes random events, player decisions, and tests of reaction time to create a feeling of urgency and risk, or Tom McHenry's *Horse Master*, which openly tracks a number of statistics for the player while also secretly managing others that affect the course of the narrative in the background.

"LUDIFICATION"
and/or
GAMIFICATION:

What is unique about Twine?

- How can game-making become more accessible?
  - How is a game like/not like a book?
  - What is *meaningful* interactivity?
- How can short independently-made games support transgressive/radical art?

Twine Game Examples:

- Night Confessional: https://sweetfish.itch.io/confessional
- Crows, Crows, Crows, The Temple of No: https://crowscrowscrows.itch.io/the-temple-of-no
- Tom Bissel and Matthew S. Burns, The Writer Will Do Something, https://matthewseiji.itch.io/twwds
- Agnieszka Trzaska, Lux: http://ifarchive.org/if-archive/games/competition2018/Lux/Lux.html
- Adam Dickinson, Weird Tape in the Mail: https://angrygeometry.itch.io/weird-tape
- Michael Lutz, my father's long long legs: http://correlatedcontents.com/misc/Father.html
- Michael Lutz, Tower of the Blood Lord: http://correlatedcontents.com/misc/Tower.html
- Michael Lutz, The Uncle Who Works for Nintendo: https://ztul.itch.io/the-uncle-who-works-for-nintendo
- Tiffany Funk, Teeth Monster: https://tiffanyfunk.com/teethmonster/
- Andrew Plotkin, Bigger Than You Think, https://eblong.com/zarf/zweb/btyt/
- Elizabeth Smyth, Bogeyman:
  http://ifarchive.org/if-archive/games/competition2018/Bogeyman/bogeyman.html
- Porpentine, With Those We Love Alive: http://aliendovecote.com/uploads/twine/empress/empress.html
- neongray, Cat Petting Simulator: https://neongrey.itch.io/pet-that-cat
- Anna Anthropy, Queers in Love at the End of the World: http://auntiepixelante.com/endoftheworld/
- Zoe Quinn, Depression Quest: http://www.depressionquest.com/dqfinal.html
- Kitty Horrorshow, daymare #1: "ritual": http://philome.la/kittyhorrorshow/daymare-1-ritual/play
- A Dark Room: http://adarkroom.doublespeakgames.com/

Getting Started with Twine (https://twinery.org/):

Twine Cookbook: https://twinery.org/cookbook/

Harlowe guide: https://twine2.neocities.org/

Introduction to Games as Art Practice: Artgames, Non-Games, & Mods

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

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Sharp describes three communities of practice and offers case studies for each. "Game Art," which includes such artists as Julian Oliver, Cory Arcangel, and JODI (Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans) treats videogames 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, Mary Flanagan, and the collaboration of Nathalie Pozzi and Eric Zimmerman—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.

Introduction to Games as Art Practice: Artgames, Non-Games, & Mods

John Sharp, *Works of Game: On the Aesthetics of Games and Art*, MIT Press, 2015
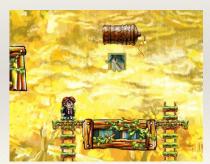
John Sharp, "The Curiously Short History of Game Art," 2012

3 Designations/Communities of Practice:

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

Connor McCann, *Rotor*, 2017

Braid, Number None, 2008

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The Crossing, Bill Viola, 1996

Bill Viola: multimedia artist known for large-scale installation work; themes of religion (comparative between Catholic and Zen ideals); meditative quality

https://www.billviola.com/

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Night Journey, Bill Viola and Tracy Fullerton, 2007

https://www.thenightjourney.com/

Game trailer (remaster):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Lb57ZNLBbk

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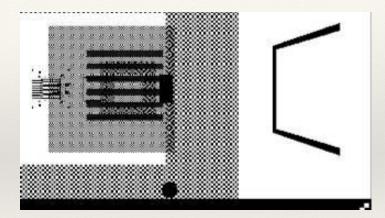
Figure 1.1
Installation view of *The Night Journey* in the Museum of the Moving Image exhibition "Virtual Reality." Courtesy of the Museum of the Moving Image. Photograph by David Love.

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Artgames, Non-Games, & Mods

Game Art

Appropriating the tools of video games to create art.

Examples:
Night Journey, Bill Viola and Tracy Fullerton
Myfawny Ashmore
Cory Arcangel
JODI
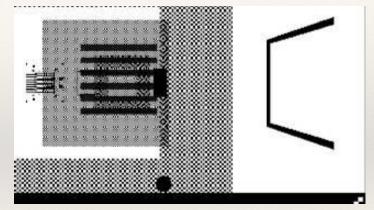
SOD, JODI (Joan Heemskerk and Dirk Paesmans), 1999

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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.

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

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

https://myfanwy.ca/

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"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

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Super Mario Clouds, Cory Arcangel, 2002

https://coryarcangel.com/

Cory Arcangel (born May 25, 1978) is an American post-conceptual artist who makes work in many different media, including drawing, music, video, performance art, and video game modifications.

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Super Mario Clouds, Cory Arcangel, 2002

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Various Self-Playing Bowling Games, Cory Arcangel, 2011

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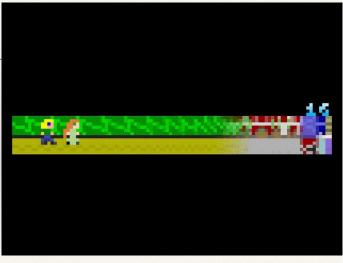
Artgames

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, Jason Rohrer

Passage, Jason Rohrer - in the MoMA collection

It 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 two-dimensional 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.
The lack of any victory conditions coupled with the inevitability of death

have led some to question whether Passage is in fact a game at all, or whether the word "game" is a sufficient label for it.

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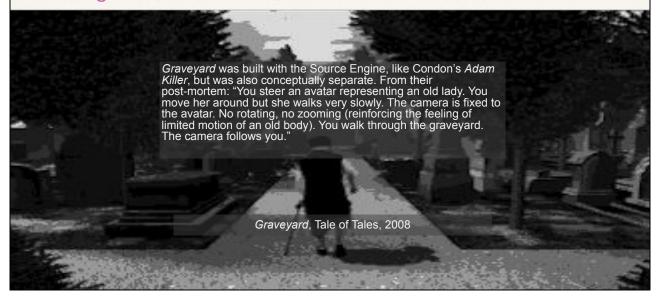
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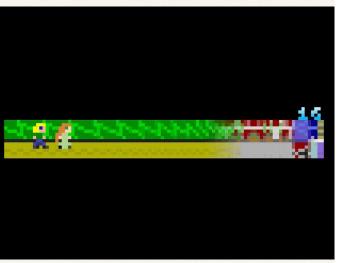
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Passage, Jason Rohrer

Introduction to Games as Art Practice:
Artgames, Non-Games, & Mods

In early 2012 Angela Washko founded "The Council on Gender Sensitivity and Behavioral Awareness in World of Warcraft" as an intervention within World of Warcraft, the most popular massively multiplayer role playing game of all time. Instead of continuing to following the quest structure of the game - killing dragons, getting better equipment, joining more competitive guilds...while performing as "The Council on Gender Sensitivity and Behavioral Awareness in World of Warcraft," Washko facilitates discussions with players inside the game about the ways in which the communities therein addresses women and how players respond to the term "FEMINISM". Washko is interested in the impulse of the player-base to create an oppressive, misogynistic space for women within a physical environment that is otherwise accessible and inviting.

A Bad Apple Can Ruin the Bunch, Angela Washko, 2012

Performance video:
https://vimeo.com/61459549

Introduction to Games as Art Practice:
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Graveyard was built with the Source Engine, like Condon's *Adam Killer*, but was also conceptually separate. From their post-mortem: "You steer an avatar representing an old lady. You move her around but she walks very slowly. The camera is fixed to the avatar. No rotating, no zooming (reinforcing the feeling of limited motion of an old body). You walk through the graveyard. The camera follows you."

Graveyard, Tale of Tales, 2008

Introduction to Games as Art Practice:
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"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

Introduction to Games as Art Practice:
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Zach Gage made *lose/lose* in 2009, an art game that mimics the mechanics of *Space Invaders*, with one important twist: every enemy you destroy deletes a file on your hard-drive. Gage explains, "It makes reference to lose/lose situations in our own lives, and the idea that even though there are many times that we know doing something is a bad idea, we do it anyway."

lose/lose, Zach Gage, 2009

Introduction to Games as Art Practice:
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"I wanted to make a video game about art, [and] few works of contemporary art have that kind of famousness and stature that this [exhibit did]. At first I just thought a game about this would be hilarious, but then I realized there could be some seriousness to it as well. No one has ever really made a video game about the experience of contemporary art."

The Artist is Present - Pippin Barr, 2010

Game link:
http://www.pippinbarr.com/games/theartistispresent/TheArtistis Present.html

Introduction to Games as Art Practice:
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"Experience the exhilaration of making art you really believe in! Experience the agony of rejection by the curatorial team! Consider selling out and just making what people seem to want! Change your mind again and follow your dreams! Be a star of the art world! Be a horrible failure! Be an artist!"

Art Game - Pippin Barr, 2013

Game link:

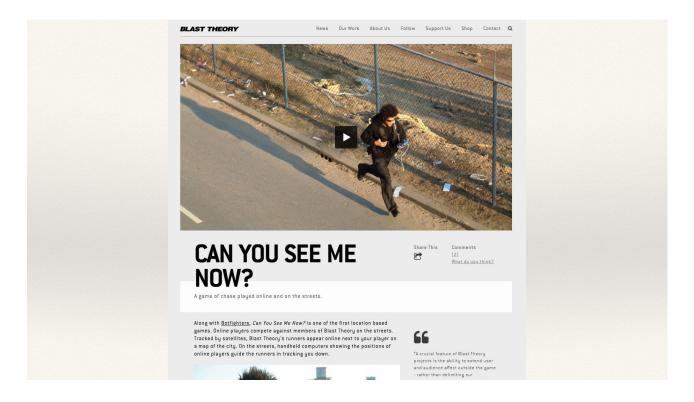http://www.pippinbarr.com/games/artgame/ArtGame.html

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.

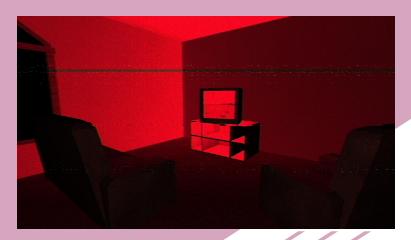The prototype of Lifeline was created in Twine.

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?

Blast Theory - Can You See Me Now? 2001

https://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/can-you-see-me-now/

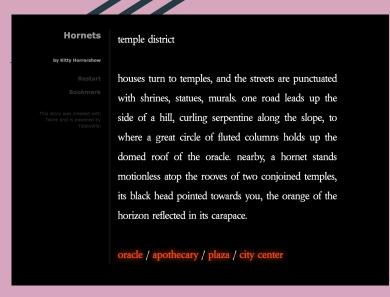*LEECHBOWL*, Kitty Horrorshow, 2016

Kitty Horrorshow is the pseudonym of an independent video game developer. Releasing her games on the distribution platform itch.io, she specializes in the psychological horror genre, with her games focusing on surreal and atmospheric horror in the aesthetic style of early 3D videogames.

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

>_*ANATOMY___*, Kitty Horrorshow, 2016

Released in 2016, *Anatomy* is a game focused on exploring an empty house and finding voice tapes within it as the house begins to change around the player. Initially, collecting these tapes is the only component of the game, but the program eventually glitches and closes itself; when reopened, the house has changed radically, with static on the game screen and audio distortion occurring. These shutdown events are repeated as the house continues to degrade more and more upon continued playing of the game.

hornets, Kitty Horrorshow, 2016

"Art games" and accessibility:

- Supporting alternative ideas/cultures/identities
- Rewarding experimentation
- Allowing for the creation of creative, supportive communities

Hornets, Kitty Horrorshow

a short horror story about insects, endings, gods, and the destructive capacity of hieroglyphs

CWs: violence, murder, gore, body horror, hornets/wasps.