

Gaming in the Gallery:

the precarious position of artists' games
within the institutional setting

Michelle R. Chen
FALL 2023

Case Studies:



She Keeps Me Damn Alive
Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley



Third World: The Bottom Dimension
Gabriel Massan & Collaborators

Games as Art?

Pros:

- immersive
- passive viewer -> active participant
- deeper understanding

Cons:

- arcade-like, theme park
- uncomfortable
- high chance of misunderstanding

A reflection of post-digital aesthetic, games are beginning to be accepted as a new medium for art. However, the "newness" of the medium means work is easily misinterpreted, and their position in the gallery as "art" is precarious at best and outrightly bastardized at worse.

If institutions are to successfully present **games as art**, they must align their institutional strategy to that of the digitally-encoded mind—one that parses information through recognition, editability, and ability to take ownership. In other words, they must lead the gallery visitor through **READ-WRITE-EXECUTE**.

New Materiality for the Digital-encoded Mind

READ: The Ability to Recognize

- understanding the dematerialized art object
- game as art, rather than consumption

need for contextualization

WRITE: The Will to Intervene

- gallery as ritual, pre-agreed rules
- performative materiality as breaking ritual

need for clear instructions

EXECUTE: Ownership and Command

- to come away with something tangible
- gameplay loop supports overarching narrative

need for easy mechanics and defined end goal

New Materiality for the Digital-encoded Mind

READ: The Ability to
Recognize

SKMDA & TWBD

- theatrical set, immersive experience
- using in-game
- imagery

WRITE: The Will to
Intervene

SKMDA & TWBD

- choice to play, or watch others compromise
- SKMDA, disclaimers & directions
- TWBD, assistant staff

EXECUTE: Ownership
and Command

SKMDA

- rail-shooter
- three simple levels

TWBD

- xBox controller
- NFT souvenir
- multistages

Conclusion

A Two-Way Relationship

- art institution presenting games as art
 - establish games as art, new medium
- but also games changing the art institution
 - community interaction championed over veneration in a white box



*Third World:
The Bottom
Dimension, 2023*
© Serpentine.
Photo: Hugo
Glendinning



*She Keeps Me
Damn Alive, 2021
Arebyte Gallery.
Image: Dan Weill*