

# Twelve Ten

1210 West Thorndale, Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60660

## *Speedrunners*

Isabelle Frances McGuire  
Ryan Nault  
Liz Vitlin  
Ellis and Parker Von Sternberg

September 29th - November 11th, 2023  
Opening September 29th, 6:00PM - 9:00PM  
Gallery Hours: Wednesday - Saturday,  
1:00PM - 6:00PM

*You have entered game space. We have allotted you certain functions in game space with limited parameters. While you may use the jump button, we do not support climbing. Please note that animated legs are not currently included as a part of your character model. Some distant features of game space may appear intriguing to you and you may wish to engage with them. We regret to inform you that these spaces are currently unavailable. Your character is not the appropriate level and/or our budgetary constraints have prevented us from developing these features as player supported arenas. They are only visible in the world to provide a sense of immersion.*

Speedrunning is a peculiar cultural phenomena to gaming, where the player attempts to complete some aspects of a game's challenges as swiftly as possible. Time optimization may be the goal of speedrunning, but what makes the approach of speedrunners truly engaging is the way in which they manipulate a game's design to achieve this speed.

The game space is not only the canvas upon which a player acts, but a set of constraints or rules which limit what a player may accomplish within its design. Speedrunning is distinct from cheating, in the sense that the speedrunner is not trying to subvert the game's rules or introduce new supersessionary rules to the game. Success in a speedrun is not determined by achieving victory on the game's terms, but by how the player prefers some state space in the game. For example: The speedrunner may choose to romance all romanceable NPCs (non-player characters) within their run, rather than beating the game. The player is working within the parameters of the code, but with aspects of it that were never explicitly or intentionally understood in its very conception. They find a sense of positive freedom in choosing how they position themselves against the structures of the game.

The speedrunner runs orthogonal to the game's design, analogous to how an artist may find themselves positioned against the constraints of their medium, the milieu of the artworld, or society more broadly. While the full extent of these structures may not be known, they are not unknowable, and it is in allowing oneself to be trapped in the play of the game that the artist expresses a cunning intelligence.

Baudrillard famously made the statement that Disneyland existed only to convince us that everything else that surrounded it was real. While his point was that the America which surrounded Disneyland was no less of a fabrication, in the post-digital age, where it seems any reality dreamed of may be manufactured and circulated as readily as any other, would it not be the very material production of the representational order that is closest to the real? The artists in this exhibition all engage in the discursive structure of this hyperreal state, manipulating its rules of engagement as they find them through their own distinctive media and methodology:

Isabelle Frances McGuire works with animatronics, a hybrid form of art and engineering, or “Imagineering”, that Disney pioneered to craft a seamless vision for its theme park experiences. The world of the Imagineer, like the world of a game, exists for the viewer, who is the central premise of a world designed to wrap them in its illusion. McGuire gleefully inverts the techniques of the Imagineer, baring the bones of its construction and making present the Frankenstein amalgamation of cultural and technical detritus from which their magic is drawn.

Ryan Nault captures digital images of his engagement with the playgrounds of the ultrawealthy on his phone, re-interpreting them into his own oblique and dreamlike allegories. Presented in a uniform format, constrained to mimic the aspects of a screen, his transformation of the smuggled image to panel provides a new means of taking ownership over a world that is not explicitly for him, but that the role of the artist provides a unique portal into.

Liz Vitlin works from a digital archive retrieved from her childhood computer, investigating the world of her lost self. As the child of Russian immigrants, coming of age at the “end of history” and the explosion of a new suite of digital tools, Vitlin not only reconstructs her personal history, but upscales and digitally enhances it. Vitlin deploys the special effects of a future that her younger self and a collapsing empire could not have envisioned, generating documents of the past in the present.

Ellis and Parker Von Sternberg engage the gallery as a game space in its own right - a place where its conventions might be perverted and made to demonstrate the social constructions underlying its architecture. Among other works, they introduce a series of transgressive, but nonetheless ambiguous found images whose establishment as works of art is only generated through the labor and creative choices of the framer solicited to make the works presentable for the gallery.

*Press any button to start.*