

= Kellee Santiago =

Kellee Santiago is a Venezuelan @-@ American video game designer and producer . She is the co @-@ founder and former president of thatgamecompany . Santiago was born in Caracas , Venezuela and was raised in Richmond , Virginia , where she played video games from a young age and was encouraged by her software engineer father to experiment with computers . While attending New York University 's Tisch School of the Arts , she became active in experimental theater , and intended to pursue it after earning a master 's degree in the Interactive Media Program of the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California . While there , however , she became involved in video game design , and produced Cloud , a game developed by Jenova Chen and a student team . Its success sparked her and Chen to found thatgamecompany upon graduating , and she became the president .

Santiago produced the studio 's first two games , Flow and Flower , moving more into her president role during the development of the company 's latest game , Journey . In addition to her work at thatgamecompany , Santiago is one of the backers of the Indie Fund , a group which invests in the development of independent video games , and is a TED fellow . She married fellow University of Southern California graduate Mike Stein in 2010 . After the release of Journey in 2012 , Santiago left the company ; as of 2015 , in addition to serving on several advisory boards , she works for Google Play Games .

= = Biography = =

Santiago was born in Caracas , Venezuela , and was raised in Richmond , Virginia . She played video games from a young age , cooperatively playing them with her younger brother ; one of her earliest games was Sleuth , which she describes as " simple , but so effective and so evocative " in instilling emotion in the player . Her father , a software engineer , had a computer in the house from when she was young , and encouraged Santiago to experiment with it . She moved to New York City at the age of 18 to attend the Tisch School of the Arts of New York University , where she was involved in amateur theater . She focused in theater on developing new works , rather than adapting older ones , and was especially drawn towards incorporating interactive digital media into her works . She ascribes this to her father 's work in software engineering and her experiments with computers , which drove her into using them in her performances as she had more experience than the others in her group .

She moved to Los Angeles in 2003 when she was 24 , and studied towards a master 's degree in the Interactive Media Program of the School of Cinematic Arts at the University of Southern California . Her intention was to remain in theater , but in her second semester took a class taught by Tracy Fullerton on the history of game design , which inspired her to focus her studies on video game design instead . The class caused her to realize " how much hadn 't been done " in the realm of communication and expression in video games and the lack of established structure and rules as to how it was best to make games , which appealed to the part of her that was interested in experimental theater . While at school she produced the award @-@ winning game Cloud , developed by Jenova Chen and a student team , and also worked on other video games such as Darfur is Dying .

Cloud was intended as an experiment by the group to see if they could create a game that " expressed something different than video games had in the past " , as well as determine the level of interest in the gaming community for video games of that nature . The game received over 400 @,@ 000 downloads in the first four months after release , " more than every single person in every single theater [she] had ever worked in , " which convinced Santiago to remain in the video game industry indefinitely . The strong response to the game , released in 2005 , inspired her and Chen to consider founding their own company to continue making games like it after they left school ? where the design was based on the emotions they wanted to inspire rather than gameplay mechanics .

= = = thatgamecompany = = =

Upon graduating , Santiago and Chen founded thatgamecompany in May 2006 , with a contract with Sony Computer Entertainment to develop three games for the PlayStation Network . In addition to her role as president of the company , she also initially served as the producer for the studio . Despite her job title , she was still involved in the design of the games as well . The first game by the studio was Flow , an adaptation of a game that Chen had made for his thesis at USC , which was released in 2007 . The game caused the studio to be noted as a key figure of independent video game development ; in 2008 , Gamasutra recognized the studio as one of the " 20 Breakthrough Developers " of the year , emphasizing Santiago 's key role . The second game for the studio , and the first to be completely original to the company , was Flower , released in 2009 . Both titles were heavily praised by critics and received several awards , as well as garnering high sales . For the studio 's third game , Journey , thatgamecompany hired Robin Hunicke as the producer , allowing Santiago to focus more on directing the company as a whole . Journey was released on March 13 , 2012 ; two weeks later on March 29 , 2012 , Santiago announced her departure from thatgamecompany , not specifying what her plans were for the future .

During the development of Journey , in 2009 , Santiago became a TED fellow , giving a talk at a USC conference where she discussed whether video games were art , which was responded to a year later by Roger Ebert . Santiago was one of the backers of the Indie Fund , started in March 2010 , a group which invests in the development of independent video games . In October 2010 , Santiago married Mike Stein , whom she met while they were both at the University of Southern California . In 2011 she was named as one of the top 100 most influential women in technology by Fast Company .

In March 2013 , Santiago joined Ouya to lead developer relations . She also joined the Women in Games International advisory board in May 2014 . In 2014 she also became an official adviser for Night Light Interactive . In October 2015 , following the sale and dissolution of the company , Santiago left Ouya for Google Play Games .

= = Influences and philosophy = =

Santiago described her work at thatgamecompany as creating emotional responses , in order to demonstrate that video games can create a wider range of experiences than are typically shown . She felt that thatgamecompany 's goal during her tenure there was " to create games that push the boundaries of videogames as a communicative medium , and to create games that appeal to a wide variety of people . " Through this she hopes to change the rest of the industry to also approach making videogames as a " creative medium " rather than a product . She , both independently with the Indie Fund and through thatgamecompany has tried to support the independent video game development industry by funding and connecting independent game developers .

= = Video game credits = =

Santiago is credited on the following games :

WWE Smackdown vs. Raw 2006 (2005) . THQ Inc .

Karaoke Revolution Party (2005) , Konami Digital Entertainment , Inc .

Guitar Hero (2005) , RedOctane , Inc .

Cloud (2005) , USC Interactive Media

Happy Feet (2006) , Midway Home Entertainment , Inc .

Darfur is Dying (2006)

CMT Presents : Karaoke Revolution Country (2006) , Konami Digital Entertainment , Inc .

The Ant Bully (2006) , Midway Home Entertainment , Inc .

The Winter Solstice (2007) , Vertigo Games

Braid (2008) , Microsoft Game studios

Flower (2009) , Sony Computer Entertainment Europe Ltd .

The Misadventures of P.B. Winterbottom (2010) , 2K Play

Q.U.B.E. (2011) , Toxic Games

The Unfinished Swan (2012) , Sony Computer Entertainment America , Inc .

Journey (2012) , Sony Computer Entertainment America , Inc .

Dear Esther (2012) , thechineseroom

Monaco : What 's Yours is Mine (2013) , Majesco Entertainment Company

Gone Home (2013) , The Fulbright Company LLC