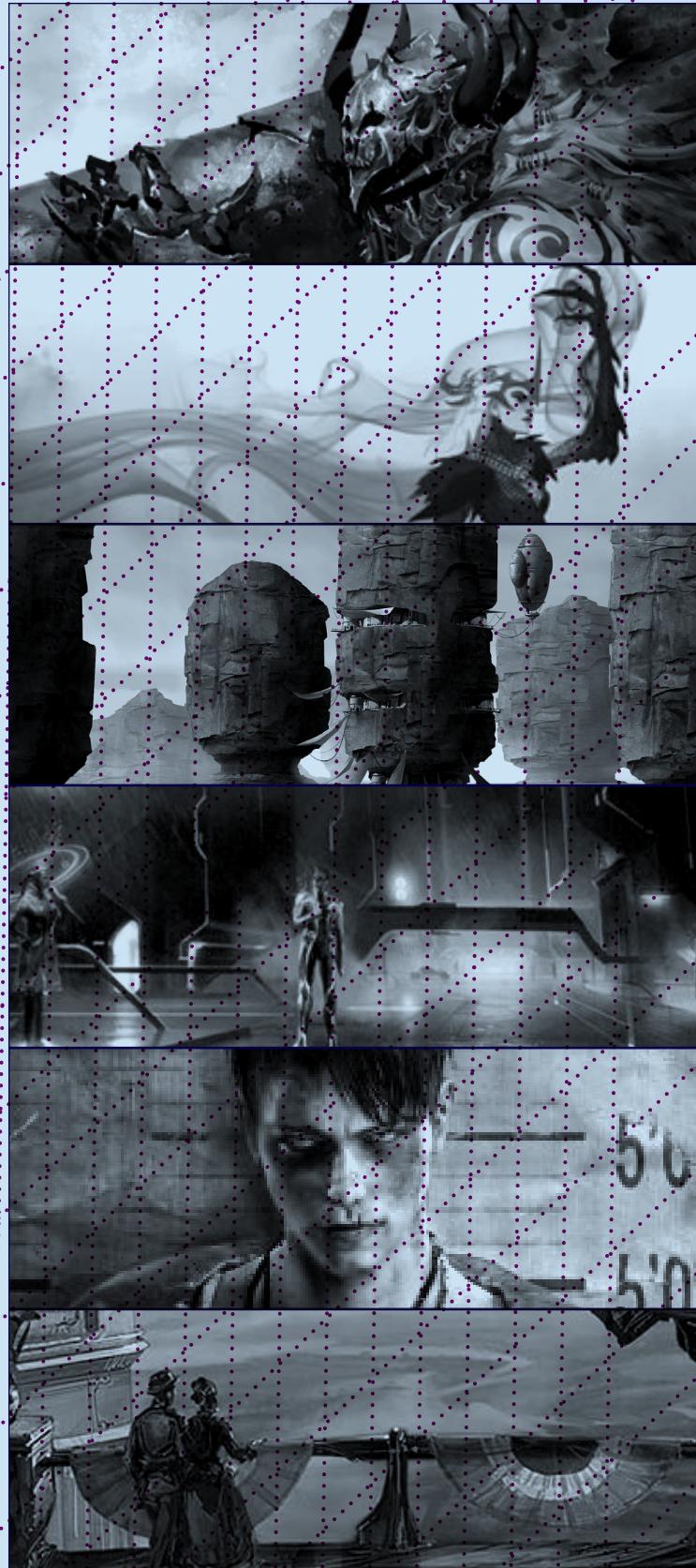


MESH.

the art of gamemaking





ISSUE 1



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free to play model: de toekomst?





EDITORIAL

| karel de grande |

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CONCEPT: WATCHTOWER

*the best cgi trailers the internet has to offer:
read our opinions while making some popcorn!*



BIOWARE TEASES MASS EFFECT 3

When good ol' Bioware announces something, the web almost always buzzes with rumors and speculation. It looks like this time they were mostly right. The teased image was a still from the very first Mass Effect 3 cinematic trailer. Perfectly crafted by Blur Studios (see also: studio breach), we are introduced to a human soldier. This sniper is apparently one of earth's last soldiers waiting to be rescued by Commander Shephard. As for the trailer I think they did a great job: It's interesting to see the

war being fought on another front. Earth needing help builds up the tension while also bringing the fight home for the last in the trilogy. The pacing of the trailer builds and slowly shows the scope of Shephard's next mission. However, the electronic music played at the end seems to have worn out it's welcome. Supporting a modern trailer like this, the eighties influenced tune could use some orchestral variant in my opinion.

THE ELDER SCROLLS V GOES NORTH



The first teaser for 'Skyrim' is a stylish one: we're shown a silver wall ornament. The voice-overs vaguely hint at the plot while the metal figures act out certain events. Especially the flames curling around the Norse captured my attention and immediately triggered my hype meter! Hearing the soundtrack at the end puts you in an elder scrolls mood and that's not a bad thing. Let the adventuring begin once again (and the hoping for a better engine)!



EPIC SPECTACLE(S)

The latest trailer for Deus Ex: Human Revolution truly made me a believer! The pacing, the lighting and the soundtrack are some key aspects here. The five minute long trailer is cut in a way you really feel the tension and want to know what

is going on in this rather dystopic future. The Blade Runner-esque visions remain top notch while the song 'Icarus' adds a new level of epicness to game trailers in general. A must see!

BLIZZARD DOES IT AGAIN: CATACLYSM ROARS



While many gamers and people in general dislike World of Warcraft for its shallow gameplay, ugly graphics or overall addictiveness Blizzard sure knows how to make impressive trailers! This time we feel the rage of a very upset dragon. Thanks to some impressive voice-acting and the clattering of hammers and metal it's clear that this is no friendly little dragon. The rhythm also adds a certain tension, like the

drummers marching in an army. Once again the whole looks very epic and Hollywood-ish. The photorealistic approach of the cartoony models is still a winner. Too bad their games don't look nearly as impressive as these intros.

:trailers in HD on www.mesh.com/watchtower:

CONCEPT: STUDIO BREACH

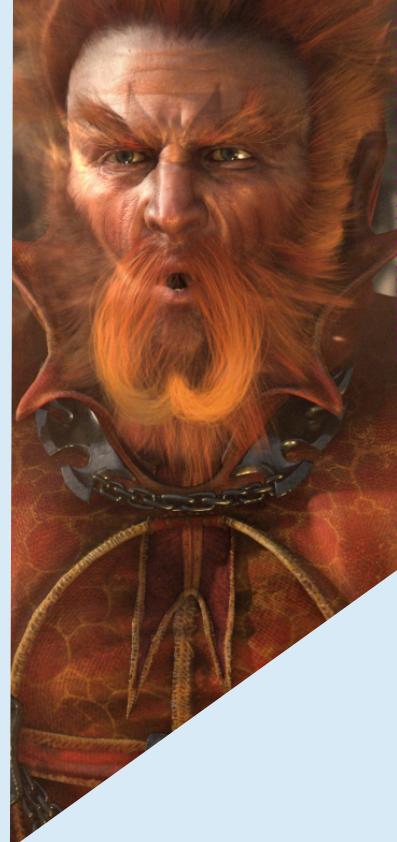
we take a look at some hidden gems: what studios put out the most creative work?

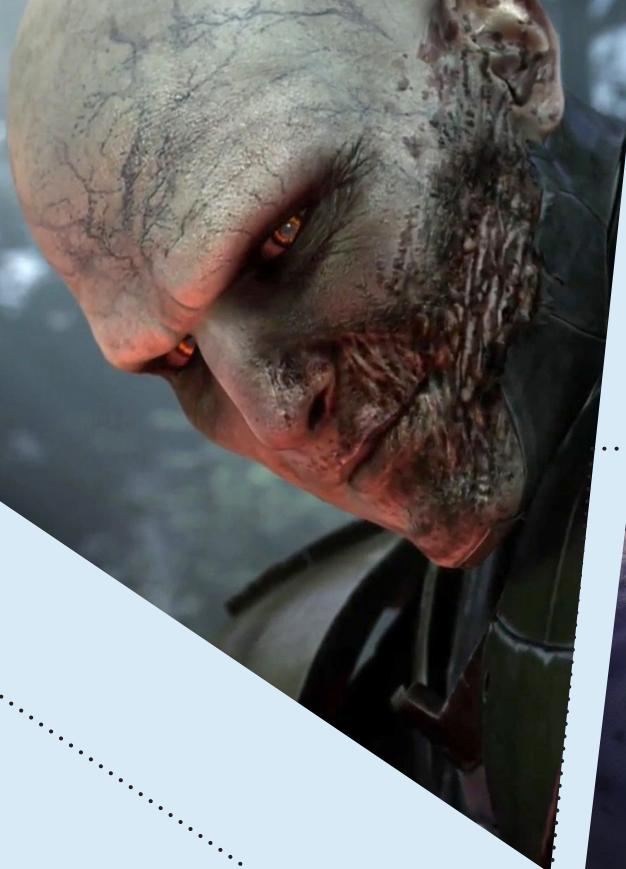
A TALENT FOR QUALITY

We've all marveled at the cinematic trailers for *The Old Republic*, DC Online or *Mass Effect* and wondered about who makes this stuff? The correct answer would be: **BLUR STUDIO**. Meanwhile they're known as 'the Pixar of Gameland'. They house some of the most talented people in the animation business and make short movies and pre-rendered videogame animations. We let Kevin Margo talk a little about tools and the work on a recent project: a trailer for *Firefall* (see next spread).

Blur Studio has been creating award-winning visual effects, animation and design, applying its creative skills across various mediums. They produce 3D character animation, motion design and visual effects for feature films and television, game cinematics & trailers, large format films, location-based entertainment, commercials and integrated media. Located in Venice, California, Blur combines the passion and excitement from their directors, animators, designers, concept artists, and writers with the clients into a collaborative creative approach that results in compelling visuals and storytelling.

"That's a nicely polished summary of what I'd call a truly unique and kick ass work environment filled with inspiring artists who bring tons of skill and heart to every project that goes through the studio. The air is thick with creative energy and it's been a blast contributing and feeding off the buzz." Says Kevin Margo, CG Supervisor with Blur Studio.





We recently completed a trailer for Firefall, a team based action shooter developed by Red 5 Studio. Their mandate was simple: "Here are the characters, aliens, and environment we want to feature...please give us a 3 minute cinematic to support our game announcement at the PAX conference. Oh and btw, we need it in 7 weeks." From a visual standpoint my responsibility with each project is to deliver and evolve the expected blur quality. One of the benefits of the CG Sup position at blur is the opportunity to handle art direction, technical execution and experimentation with new software/tools. This led to my interest in V-Ray and championing its full integration into the blur pipeline. With Firefall, my team and I had to deliver it looking as great as possible given the extremely tight schedule. I was the first artist on the project and last off it...naturally this developed a broad master plan of execution which I was tapped for constantly. A lot of my time was spent on look development, critiquing artist progress, organization, facilitating communication,

and anticipating and resolving hurdles before they impacted production. Once the scope and script was sorted out, I worked closely with all the departments from a technical and art direction standpoint. Kept a guiding eye on characters, environments, props, lighting, shaders, hair and fx. I established the lighting direction and master shot/compositing workflows for a (nearly) smooth roll out to the team. Towards the end I was jumping into production, helping the lighting/compositing team on shots that needed some extra love to hit the bar all the way through to delivery.

.....
<http://vz2.blur.com/work>
.....



"Please give us a 3 minute cinematic to support our game announcement at the PAX conference. Oh and by the way, we need it in 7 weeks."



SETTING: SPOTLIGHT

fifteen minutes of fame for interesting projects or developers.

FROM DUST

ERIC CHAHI AND THE ELEMENTS

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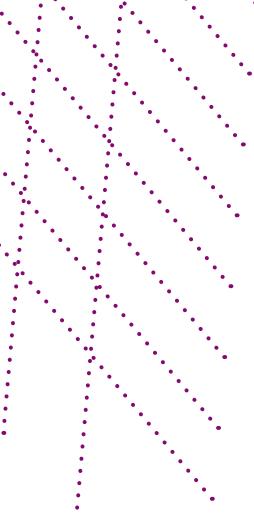
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GAMEOGRAPHY

1983	frog
1983	carnaval
1984	le sceptre d'anubis
1984	doggy
1985	infernal runner
1986	le pacte
1990	future wars
1991	another world
1998	heart of darkness
2004	amiga classix 4
2011	from dust

the artwork is clearly influenced by tribal art. meanwhile the engine translates this to soft, vibrant and organic graphics.





REBOOT

"We knew we wanted to make a young Lara Croft, and we wanted her to be a blend of someone that has a level of vulnerability and inner strength. She has this aspirational quality. She wants to be someone and to pull away from the perception of who she is because of her legacy of being a Croft. She is her own person and she is trying to make her way in this world. So that was the focus early on – trying to understand who she was inside.

Once we understood that biography, the next step was to make her as believable and relatable as possible. We wanted to make a girl that was somewhat familiar, yet had a special quality about her – something in the way her eyes look and her expression in her face that makes you want to care for her. That was our number one goal when we started thinking about her visualization – that people would have empathy for Lara, while at the same time knowing she has this inner strength that will allow her to become a hero. That was the first order of business."

Brian Horton about his Lara Croft redesign



DIRECTING THE FORCE

One of Bioware's first MMO's main selling points is the enticing storyline which features choices never before seen in the genre. When you offer a movielike experience you obviously need professional cinematics, and loads of them. Paul Marino, Cinematic Designer tells us about his job on **THE OLD REPUBLIC.**

Bounty Hunter: concept art
(James Olen, Creative Director Bioware)



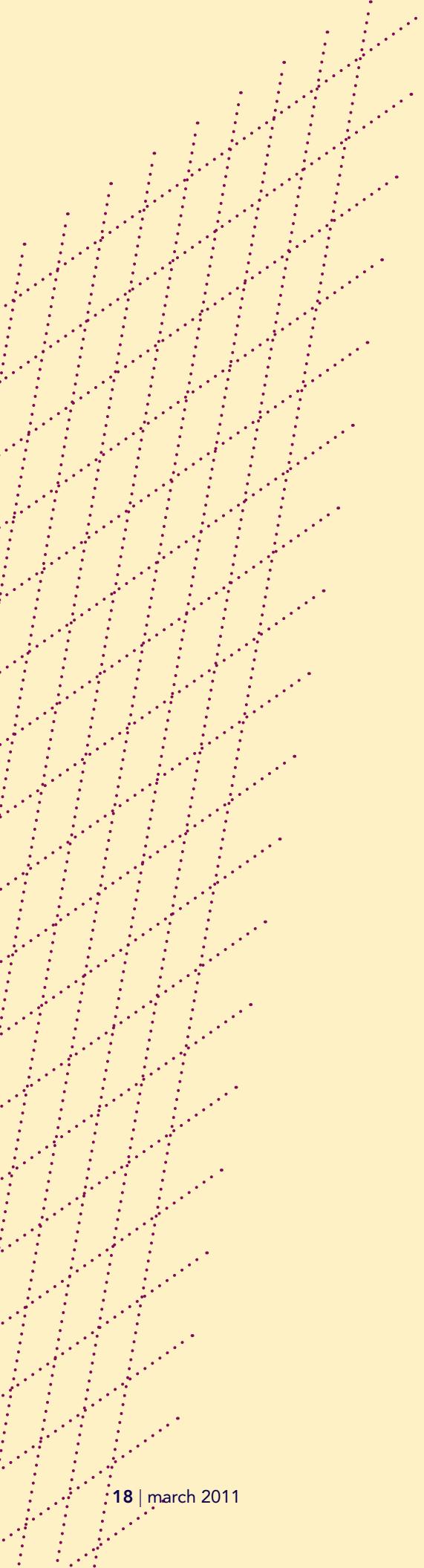


So, what is Cinematic Design?

This is a question I get asked a lot. To put it simply, Cinematic Design is using cinematic presentation to facilitate narrative and gameplay, and heighten emotional involvement. By the use of a directed camera, we're able to make the story real to the player, allowing them to get involved with the characters and make meaningful choices.

The inclusion of Cinematic Design is what sets *The Old Republic* apart from other MMO games. Rather than being led by a disjointed, text-driven narrative, the Player is part of a dynamic plot in *The Old Republic*. In conversations, we can show those subtle moments where characters interact with and affect one another; where choices matter. Do we kill the Sith acolyte? Do we spare him? Will he show up later in our character's path to be dealt with? Or will he fight alongside us, supporting us in the most crucial of times? These choices are gameplay, presented in cinematic form. Sure, they could be made through the use of simple point-and-click, text-only interface, but the reward of our choices would be passed over and the player would never fully experience the impact of those decisions.

Other BioWare games have proven how rewarding interaction in conversations can be. In *The Old Republic*, we extend this approach to the group level – every player in the party has their say in which direction the conversation will go. A young exile takes an adversarial tone with the group, and challenges them to a duel. Your Sith Inquisitor grows impatient with him and chooses to detonate some nearby explosives – but will it be overruled by another who votes to fight him? Beyond advancing your story, this system extends the gameplay experience into conversations, allowing the vote roll to factor into how the narrative plays out.



What does a day in the life of a Cinematic Designer look like?

A Cinematic Designer puts on their director's beret for each scene they work on. Is this a scene for the Jedi Consular? It will most likely be a quiet, emotionally-centered setting, focusing on the difficult choices ahead. Or perhaps it's a scene for a Bounty Hunter who confronts an obnoxious nobleman and has to choose the best way to extract the information he needs. For each scene, the approach is similar to that of a live-action shoot. The Cinematic Designer reviews the script, considers what actors are involved and what location the incident takes place in, and ultimately answers the question "What does the player need to know once the scene has ended?"

To ensure that we produce exceptional scenes, designers work closely with other departments. Nearly every discipline in the studio works with Cinematic Design in some capacity. If there are questions about characters and how the scene plays out, the designer reaches out to the Writing team to make sure their take on the scene is on-target. If the designer needs a specific animation captured for the scene, they speak with the Animation team and review capture data for the shot they're putting together. Having access to such a large range of world-class talent really helps shape our cinematics into memorable experiences.

Once all of this information is gathered, the Cinematic Designer can compose their work. We have access to a wide selection of Star Wars music and sound effects, one of the largest animation libraries ever compiled for a game as well as the most voiceover dialog ever recorded for any entertainment project, and it's our job to put all of it together to create powerful scenes.

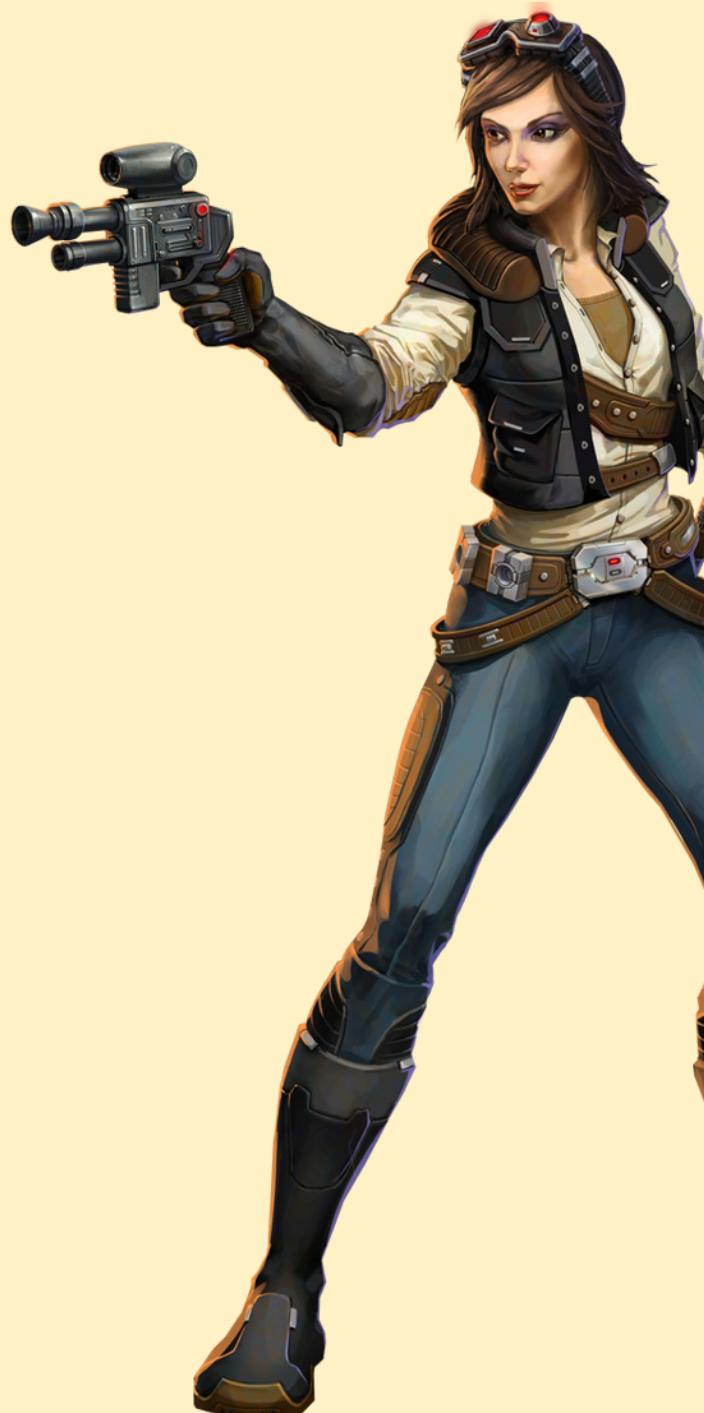
Though a large part of a Cinematic Designer's role is that of a director, there's much more we need to take into account. A Cinematic Designer is part filmmaker, part game developer, and part gamer.

"Rather than being led by a disjointed, text-driven narrative, the Player is part of a dynamic plot in The Old Republic."

Each conversation we produce is considered from all three points of view. As a director, we consider things like: how do I shoot the scene? Does the location support the action that needs to take place? As a game developer: how does the scene work within the game around it? And ultimately, as a player: how does this fit within the larger context of my game experience? Is this scene memorable? Do I understand what's going on? Each of these perspectives help craft how the game's narrative is presented and remembered. Creating these moments for the player is probably the most rewarding part of being a Cinematic Designer on The Old Republic.

Conclusion

As I mentioned earlier, the cinematic presentation of narrative can turn the simplest event into a pivotal moment. It's this crafted layering of camerawork, performance, direction and gameplay that allows us to emotionally invest into the characters and the world around them. To put a romantic spin on it, the Cinematic Design team members are the visual composers of this chapter of the Star Wars universe, developing scenes that players will remember for years to come. We hope you enjoy what's in store as much as we enjoyed telling it.



Smuggler: concept art
(James Olen, Creative Director Bioware)

SETTING: THEME

we offer some insight into the theme
of an upcoming game.

"It is possible and
desirable for humanity
to enter a transhuman
phase of existence,
in which humans are
in control of their
own evolution. In
such a phase, natural
evolution would
be replaced with
deliberate change."



CYBERNETIC ARM PROSTHESIS

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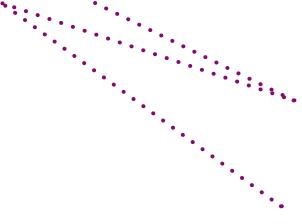
Mechanical Arm Replacement

WHAT IT DOES

TECH SPECS

SHARE THIS AUGMENTATION 

discuss on www.mesh.be/forums



DEUS EX 3 PHILOSOPHIZES ABOUT TRANSHUMANISM.

MANKIND 2.0

Deus Ex Human Revolution is the next iteration in our favourite dystopian, cyberpunk franchise. The series is all about artificial augmentations that alter or strengthen human features. This theme is also discussed in philosophy and is called transhumanism.

Transhumanism is an international intellectual and cultural movement supporting the use of science and technology to improve human mental and physical characteristics and capacities. The movement regards aspects of the human condition, such as disability, suffering, disease, aging, and involuntary death as unnecessary and undesirable. Transhumanists look to biotechnologies and other emerging technologies for these purposes. Dangers, as well as benefits, are also of concern to the transhumanist movement.

The term "transhumanism" is symbolized by H+ and is often used as a synonym for "human enhancement". Although the first known use of the term dates from 1957, the contemporary meaning is a product of the 1980s when British philosopher Max More and some American futurists began to articulate transhumanist principles, and organize in the United States what has since grown into the transhumanist movement. Transhumanist thinkers predict that human beings may eventually be able to transform themselves into beings with such greatly expanded abilities as to merit the label "posthuman". Transhumanism is therefore sometimes referred to as "posthumanism" or a form of transformational activism influenced by posthumanist ideals.

The transhumanist vision of a transformed future humanity has attracted many supporters and detractors from a wide range of perspectives. Transhumanism has been described by one critic, Francis Fukuyama, as the world's most dangerous idea, while one proponent, Ronald Bailey, counters that it is the "movement that epitomizes the most daring, courageous, imaginative, and idealistic aspirations of humanity".

SETTING: WORLD DESIGN

fifteen minutes of fame: speciaal voor de developers die iets vernieuwend brengen.

JJB

| art director deus ex 3 |

You probably recognise Jonathan Jacques-Belletete. He's not just Human Revolution's Art Director, responsible for its odd blend of Renaissance fashions and cyberpunk tech, he's also the model the player character Adam Jensen is based on. In this game, and with the art direction it is taking he tries to re-introduce cyberpunk into the world of contemporary fiction. This is very clear when you see the concept art and the unique mood the city scenes have. This is the first time he's the head of art direction on a project of this scale. Previously he worked on games such as Wet, Far Cry and Rainbow Six: Vegas.

CYBERPUNK is a science fiction genre noted for its focus on "high tech and low life." The name is a blend of cybernetics and punk and was originally coined by Bruce Bethke as the title of his short story "Cyberpunk," published in 1983. It features advanced science, such as information technology and cybernetics, coupled with a degree of breakdown or radical change in the social order. Cyberpunk plots often center on a conflict among hackers, artificial intelligences, and megacorporations, and tend to be

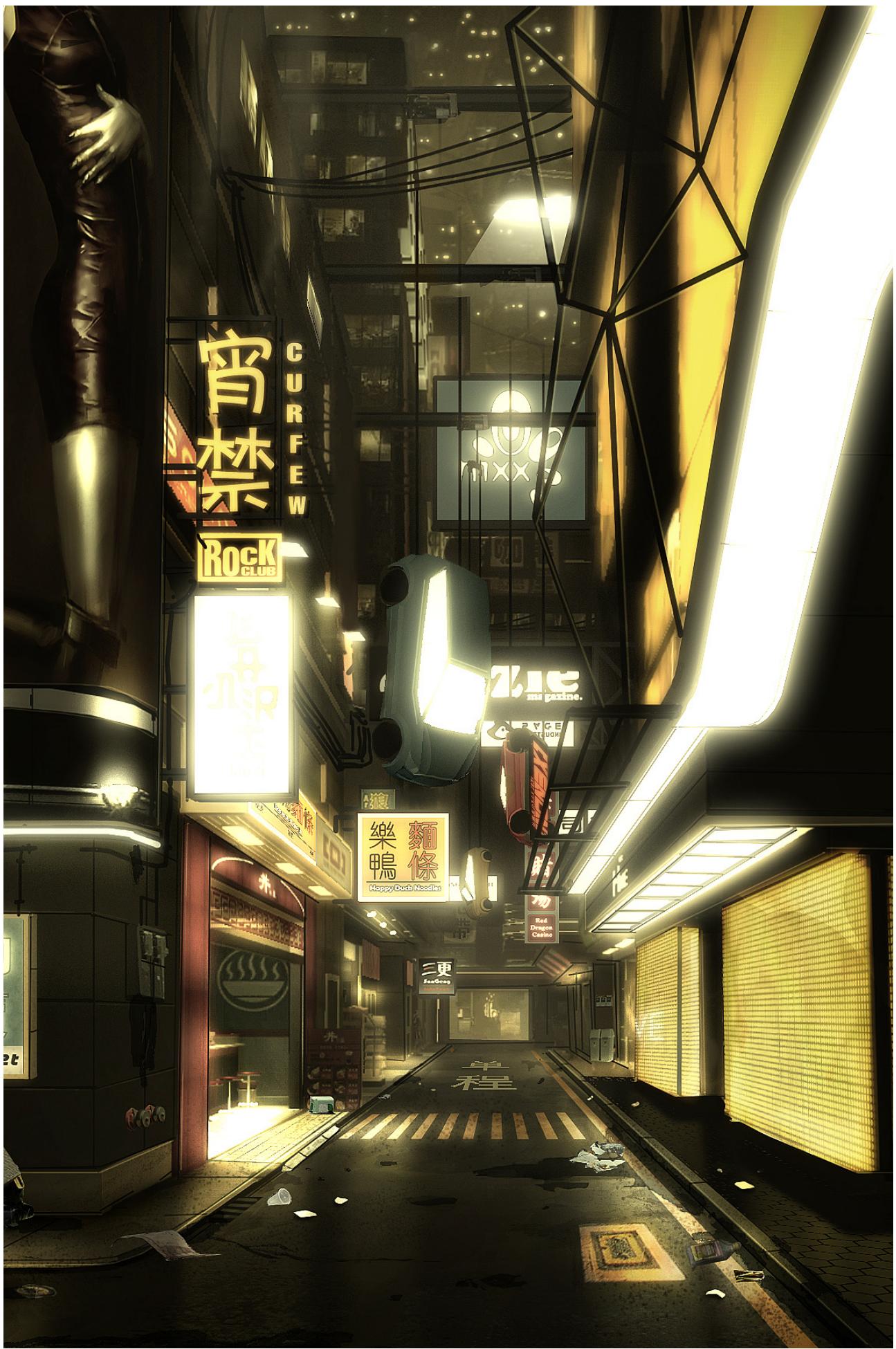
set in a near-future Earth, rather than the far-future settings or galactic vistas found in novels such as Isaac Asimov's Foundation or Frank Herbert's Dune. The settings are usually post-industrial dystopias but tend to be marked by extraordinary cultural ferment and the use of technology in ways never anticipated by its creators ("the street finds its own uses for things"). Much of the genre's atmosphere echoes film noir, and written works in the genre often use techniques from detective fiction.

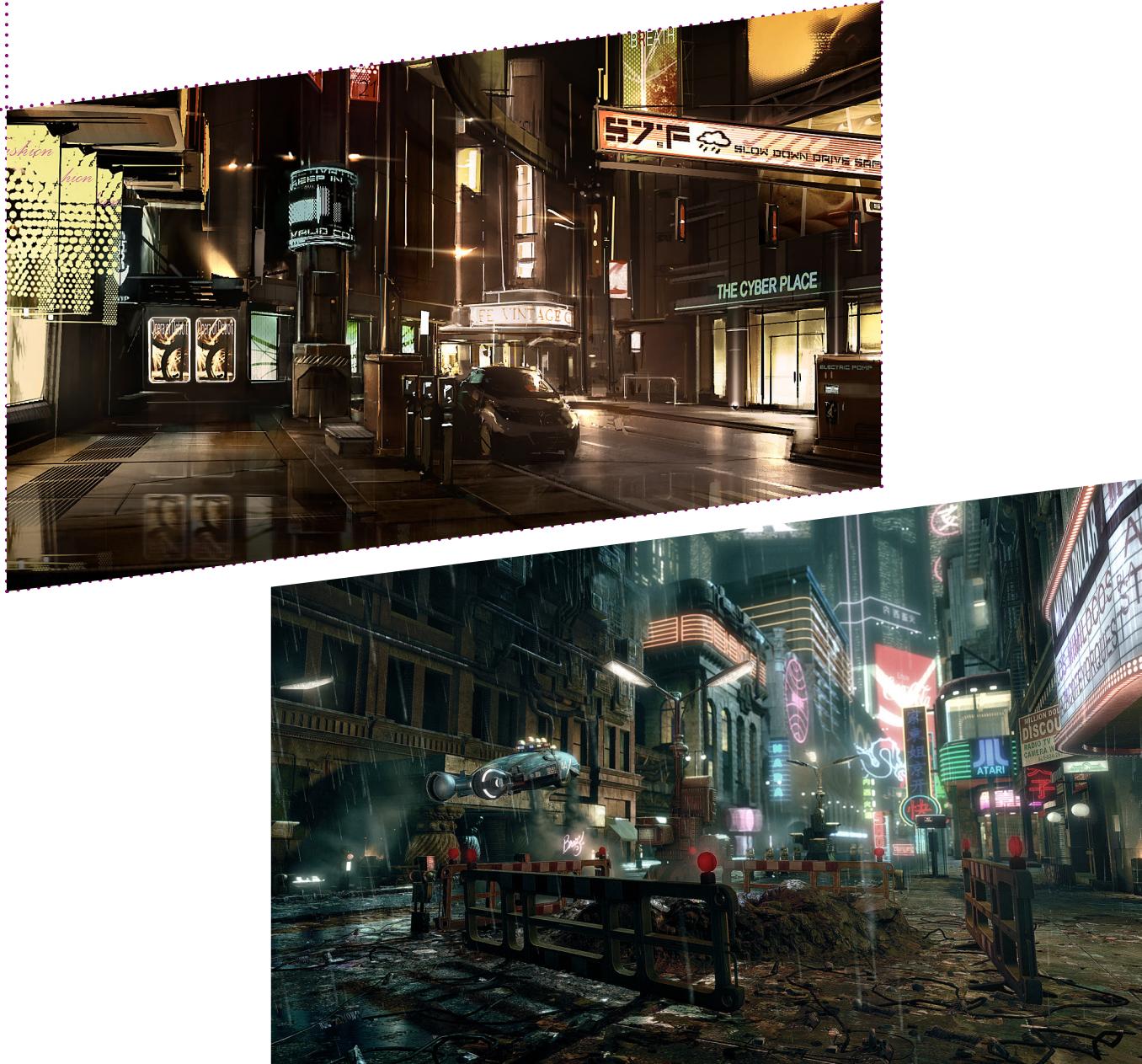






"When you're in Detroit I think you really feel properly like the Detroit of today, with real technological stuff just added over. For example, there's stuff like the charging stations for electrical cars, and again you see all the logos on there, and you can read the instructions on how the whole thing would function and stuff like that. You look at the car designs and they're inspired by concept cars that are being done today."





"For example, when you're in the seaport, the immediate playing area is really like a seaport. It looks fairly, you know, like the thing could be fifty, sixty years old, but then you look, you tilt your head and there's that double decker city thing there. So I think it's this juxtaposition that we're doing all the time, I think it makes it work. I think that's what the anticipation is and I think that's also what Cyberpunk is. It's like, the old is there, but there's that crazy new that's grafted over it. And we have it at different levels, you know, the double decker is right there, but there's like all these little things left and right."



CRAIG **HOUSTON**

| writer call of duty: black ops |

We zouden het bijna gaan vergeten terwijl we elkaar online aan het afknallen zijn maar de nieuwste Call of Duty, ontwikkeld door Treyarch heeft ook een excellente singleplayer campagne. Het ambitieuze verhaal speelt zich af gedurende de Koude Oorlog: we spelen Mason, een soldaat die op een geheimzinnige locatie ondervraagd wordt over zijn missies uit het verleden en een reeks mysterieuze cijfers. De soldaat herleeft zijn militaire verleden aan de hand van flashbacks, die we als speler uiteraard mogen spelen. Je kan in het begin vermoeden dat het om James Bond toestanden en schreeuwgerige complottheorieën gaat maar de authenticiteit en goede dialogen zorgen voor een meeslepend verhaal. Wij interviewden Craig Houston, een sympathieke schot, over zijn werk aan de wereldberoemde Call of Duty franchise.

Let's talk about the genesis for the plot of Black Ops.

Where did it all begin?

Well, when I wrote the script for World At War, I remember thinking that there were aspects in it that I hoped we'd get to revisit at some stage – particularly the character of Reznov. The end of the World At War in the Russian campaign segment was filled with glorious proclamations from that character about how "as heroes, we will return to Russia's embrace". Reznov said those things and, for me, even if we had never ended up doing a follow up to that story, it was a very bittersweet ending because that wasn't the reality for the heroes of the Russian Red Army when they returned. Most of them were thrown in gulags by Stalin, who had no use for heroes after the war.

Once everything had calmed down around World At War, we were talking about DLC and discussions about the next game came up. It became fairly evident quite early on that the new game would be set during the Cold War, which I was extremely excited about. I mean, I could have set another story in World War 2, but a lot of the guys on the team had done a lot of games set in that period. The Cold War was fertile ground. It was fresh and it gave us a lot of potential to recharge ourselves and explore different possibilities. So, the team spent a lot of time reading books, watching movies, doing all the stuff you do in preparation for plotting a game like this. The interrogation room came very very early on for me. It was a narrative device that would allow us to cross quite a large time period.

We didn't need to worry about players wondering 'how did they get from here to here?' because we could just cross back and forth between that hub.

The biggest thing for me with the story was that, globally, the Cold War was a time of immense distrust between the superpowers. Thematically that was something I really wanted to reinforce. I wanted to have characters the player thought they could trust and characters they thought they couldn't trust. Without going into spoiler territory, sometimes the player would be right or wrong depending on how the story panned out.



**"I'm a very conscientious
and emotional person.
For me, it's all about the
heart and it's all about
the truth."**

A close-up, low-angle shot from a video game. On the left, a man with a beard and mustache looks upwards with a serious expression. On the right, another man with short hair and a slight smile looks towards the camera. They are in a dark, gritty environment with pipes, metal structures, and a red star emblem on a wall in the background.

**"Call Of Duty: Black Ops is
a Cold War paranoia thriller
disguised as an action
game. It all goes back to
the idea of global trust – or
lack of it – filtered through
the characters."**

How do you balance handling the integrity of what you've learned about the backdrop with the demands of making, what is essentially, a piece of action entertainment?

Accurately representing the theatre of war – in this case, the secret wars as they were called – was a big thing for me. I saw quite early on when the period of the game had been announced – that the new Call Of Duty was going to be set during the Cold War – that people on forums were confused by that. There were saying things like ‘how can the new Call Of Duty be set during the Cold War? There weren’t any shots fired during the Cold War. It was all about threat.’ What a lot of these people don’t realise is that the superpowers were fighting what were called ‘proxy wars’. They were basically supporting friendly regimes in other countries that were sympathetic to their ultimate goals. Sometimes, it was over minerals and natural resources.

We considered doing a lot of stuff in the game set in Africa – we got pretty far with that – because there were a lot of African countries where the Russians were supporting one regime and the Americans would be supporting another. This is because these countries had vital resources such as uranium and cobalt.

The whole idea of wars taking place in other countries that were supported by the Russians and the Americans is something that more people should know about. You take a look at the Vietnam War. That’s a very good example. Essentially, the Americans didn’t want the spread of communism in that region. It’s even more relevant when you look at the example of Cuba; they certainly didn’t want a communist regime right on their front doorstep. I find that period fascinating, mainly – as you see in the game – a lot of the battles which took place in the Cold War aren’t known about. It’s not known by the general public. They may never be known. In a way, we had the luxury to make things up because no one can say that things like what we represent didn’t ever happen. The reality behind it all is very true. It’s all very firmly rooted in reality. In some ways, Call Of Duty: Black Ops is a Cold War paranoia thriller disguised as an action game. It all goes back to the idea of global trust – or lack of it – filtered through the characters.

The storyline is incredibly gritty, and in places very violent. There's also a lot of high-concept stuff in there too. Was this a problem when it came to sticking to the authenticity of the backdrop you were using and what you had learned from the individuals who had worked as advisers on the game?

I’m a very conscientious and emotional person. For me, it’s all about the heart and it’s all about the truth. We talk to veterans – and we do that a lot more than people think that we do – we have advisers from both US Special Forces and the Russian Special Forces and it was fascinating sometimes to hear the contrasting stories. We spoke to John Plaster who’s a former S.O.G., sniper – he’s absolutely an American war hero – and a very gracious man. He would tell us stories about what went on. Truth is always stranger than fiction. When we asked him if the Russians were ever in Vietnam in an active role, he said “I heard rumours, but I personally don’t know”.

When we spoke to one of his Russian counterparts we were told, “I know for a fact that at one stage, Americans and Russians met gun to gun. It wasn’t in Vietnam, it was in one of the neighbouring countries.” When we asked if it was Laos, he wouldn’t answer. When we asked him what happened he simply said, “the bad guys won.” That was ... (laughs) ... that was something ...

The thing was the Russian adviser was convinced we only wanted Russians in the game as antagonists. He told me; “I know we’re here to be bad guy.” But I told him, with me, it’s always a little more complicated than that. This connects with what I said earlier. I never wanted the characters in Black Ops to be defined solely by their nationality. I know that politics isn’t the governing issue for soldiers. They are there for their country. They know that a lot of what they’re being asked to do they may not agree with, but that’s their job. And their job is also about the guy standing next to them who would take a bullet for them and their families back home. And that’s true of the soldiers on both sides of the conflict here, and that was reinforced every single time I spoke to these guys.

Would you say that one of the reasons you put that sentiment in the mouth of a Russian character in the game is because of your talk with the Russian adviser?

No. (Laughs) I think I was already pretty biased towards that character due to the fact that I wrote for World At War.

How did writing a game set in the Cold War compare to one set in World War 2?

Well, in the campaign in World At War, we could let rip, really, without being too worried about some of the sensitivities about it. I mean, everyone knows that the Nazis were super-evil and, regardless of people's opinions about the Russians, it's easy to be on their side in that game. The Nazis needed to be stopped and it's more poignant if you know your history, because the Russians took the biggest hit in World War 2 in terms of casualties. So it was very easy to connect to the heart and spirit of the Russian character in the World At War campaign and run with it.

When we were doing Black Ops, and we decided to bring back Reznov, and a lot of the discussions at the time revolved around how great a bad guy he'd be. Especially because he's voiced by Gary Oldman – who's always a great bad guy. But I was always saying: "that's not who this guy is". The character was always a righteous and just man at heart. So the character's genesis in this game was there for me before we even started talking to advisers on the authenticity side of things.

Would you say that writing in games in general is getting better?

I can't speak for the rest of the industry or anyone else. For me, I can just say that there were things right at the beginning that were personally important to me that, fortunately, we were able to include. Sometimes, as far as the scenes themselves were concerned, I didn't know if they were going to be three levels apart, or one level apart. Obviously I had time to adjust if there was movement on where they'd appear in the game. But the things I wanted to put in it stayed in.

That was a great relief to me because – and I don't want to take credit for any of the amazing work the rest the team has done – those things that I felt are the heart sound of the characters are in the game. It goes back to what I said; it's not about the politics for the guys on the ground. The

moral grey areas, where good guys do bad things for good reasons – that's the fascinating side of this – they all survived in development and I'm grateful for all the support that I got. You can't go into this half-hearted. You've got to commit on this. If you go in with this subject matter, you've got to go in all the way.

Is that why you didn't shy away from having some pretty graphic violence in the campaign?

Authenticity had to be a key part of the story we were telling. The truth is, war is not pleasant and I'm a great believer in the idea that it's better to be honest about things than to sugar-coat them. You can't pretend that war doesn't get ugly. In the nature of a first-person-shooter – and I don't want to sound too pretentious here – I do worry about whether or not we're dehumanising the enemy. But the same thing goes on in war. The truth is, if you're on a battlefield, you don't know your enemy – they're just someone trying to kill you. History has shown us some amazing stories of soldiers on opposing sides meeting up and encountering each other away from that intensity, and they see how much they have in common.

The story of Call Of Duty: Black Ops has a definite plot arch, but it still has quite a few loose ends which you don't tie up in the game. Is this because you want to revisit these characters at a later date – in say, perhaps the next Call Of Duty game?

(Laughs) I swear, I really don't know. One thing I'm happy with is that we preserved chronology on this game from World At War. We didn't cheat. People who died in the first game were dead in this one. We didn't magically bring anyone back.

At the moment, I'm not sure what's going to happen. I feel very privileged to have been a part of making this game. It's strange now having spent so much time with these characters. After the roller-coaster ride I've been I feel a bit like Mason (the protagonist in the game) at the moment. Remember when he wakes up at the very beginning of the game? The first words out of his mouth are: "where am I? Where's Reznov?" I feel like that every morning right now (laughs).

hier is nog ruimte vrij voor advertenties door derden

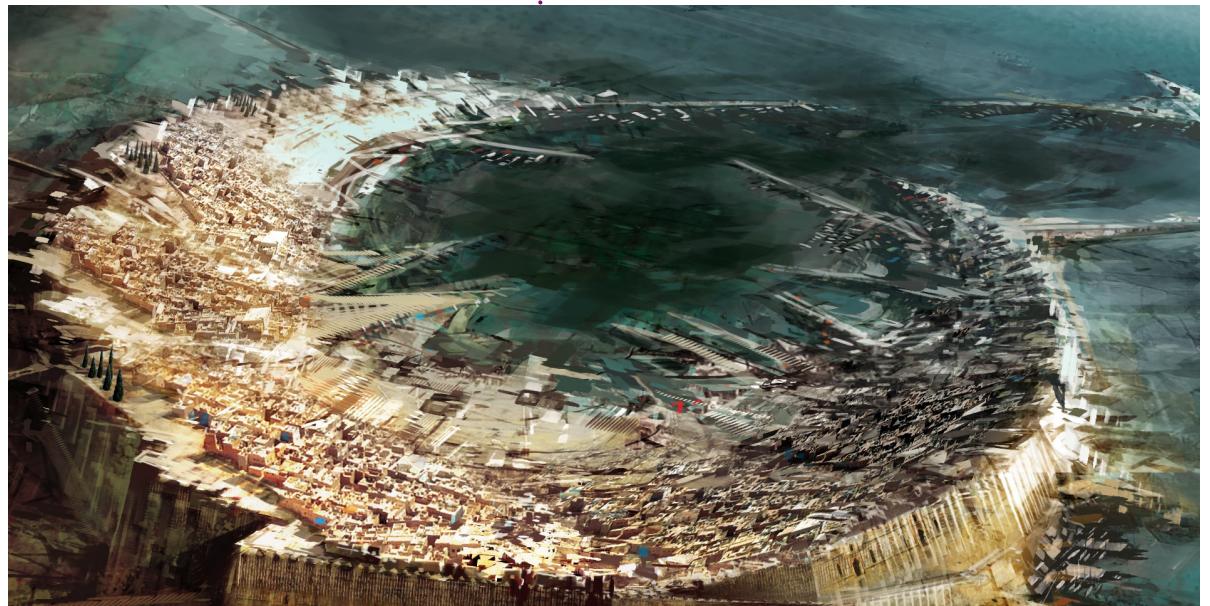


*fifteen minutes of fame: speciaal voor de
developers die iets vernieuwend brengen.*

DANIEL DOCIU

| art director guild wars 2 |

Daniel Dociu is a video game art director and concept artist. He is the chief art director for NCsoft North America and also works for its subsidiary ArenaNet. He is responsible for the distinct artstyle that characterizes the Guild Wars franchise. Dociu was born in Cluj, Romania. He obtained his master's degree in industrial design at the Fine Arts Academy in Cluj in 1982. Throughout the decade, he taught at the academy as an assistant professor and later worked as a graphic designer in Athens, Greece, a product designer and a freelance artist. He moved to the United States in 1990. From 1992 to 2003, Dociu did work for various video game developers including Squaresoft, Electronic Arts, and Zipper Interactive. His face was also used for reference for the character Father Grigori in the critically acclaimed video game Half-Life 2.



Generally, what I try to pursue in my work is an emotion or a high-level (at times rather abstract) idea, rather than a technique-driven process. Although as an industrial designer I have, over time, honed my ability to design relatively complex systems entirely in my head, I try to avoid that approach because I find myself losing interest in the subject if I have it all figured out before starting to illustrate it. I therefore allow for a good amount of searching for shapes and connections to happen in the drawing phase, to keep myself curious and entertained by occasional surprises.

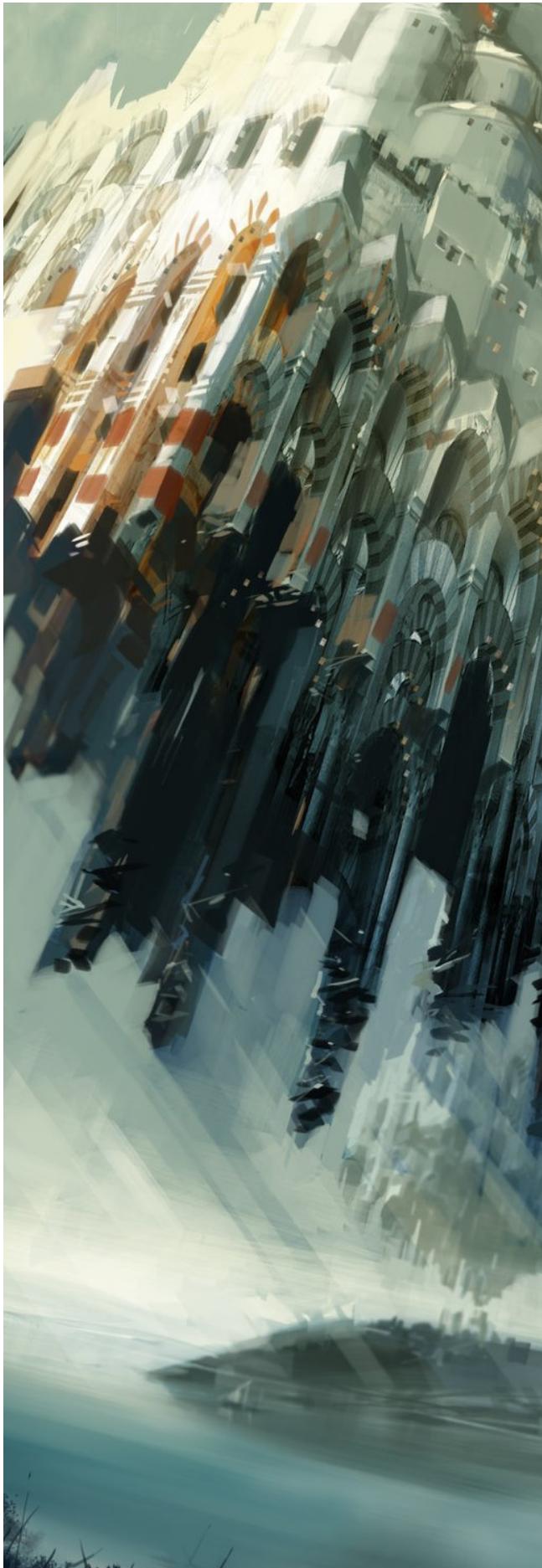




"Crab Fort is part of a series of gigantic crawling structures, powered by that elusive perfect synergy of human ingenuity and magic. They are each inhabited by self sufficient ethnic groups, with their traditions, struggles, and aspirations, sometimes converging, other times clashing...their destinies woven together by their eternal wandering across the Endless Desert. I feel that the idea is worth revisiting when less prohibitive technical constraints allow turning it into the central theme of a game."



**"Generally, what I try
to pursue in my work
is an emotion or a
high-level (at times
rather abstract) idea"**





We need to keep in mind at all times that what we are developing here should, first and foremost, qualify as entertainment. I truly believe that what you experience over the duration of the journey that is a development cycle is reflected in the entertainment value and the quality of the finished product. Truthfully, you have to keep things in perspective—we're grown-ups making games! You have to have a sense of humor and remember that we aren't... say... finding a cure for some horrendous disease or a way to prevent global warming.





"Getting your first job in the industry can be difficult, since many studios look for artists with previous industry experience. Of course, if you're just getting started, you don't have that previous experience, but you can't get that experience until you land your first job. It can be a brutal process. Networking is extremely important in the games industry, so get your name out there, attend conferences, and meet as many people in the industry as you can. Work with a lot of focus on preparing a strong portfolio.

Do your research and make sure you have a firm understanding of the state of the industry. And before you submit your portfolio for review, make sure you have researched the studio and fully understand their artistic style. Perhaps most importantly, don't give up after your first rejection (or second or third, for that matter). Instead, try to establish ongoing communications with potential employers and periodically check in with them asking for their feedback on your submissions. Then, try to apply that feedback to your work."

fancy screens or spectacular engines?
we break them down for you.

3D WITHOUT GLASSES

"to look as good as the current Nintendo handheld, the new display will need to have twice the resolution on the underlying screen."





Nintendo announced that it plans to launch a new 3D-capable handheld gaming console at E3 2010, sending the games industry into a flurry of speculation this week as to how the new machine will work.

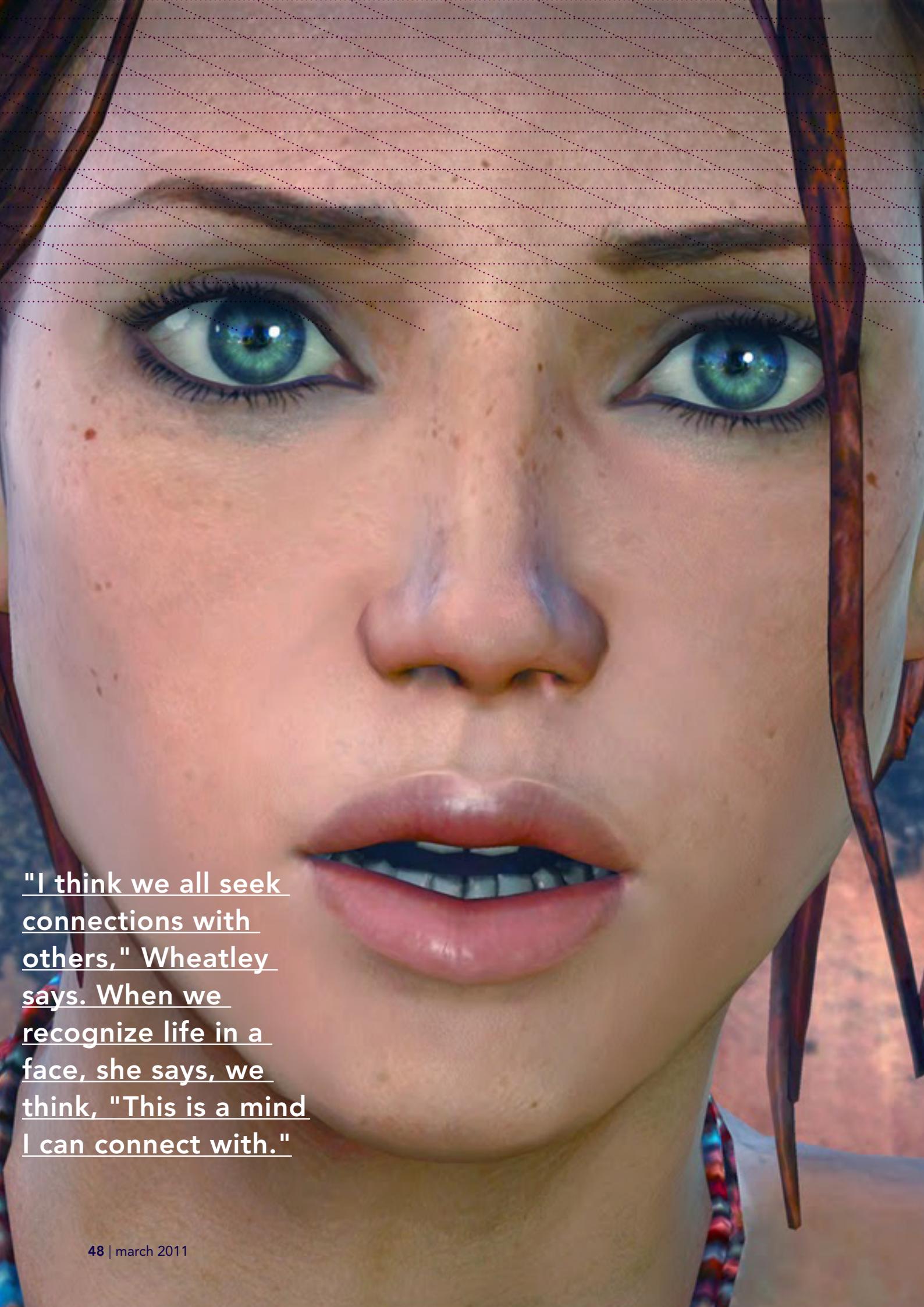
"Nintendo is likely to use lenticular technology," according to Neil Dodgson, a 3D displays expert at Cambridge University. "A lenticule is a long thin lens, shaped with a flat back and a curved front, like a slice taken off a cylinder.

"The lenticules direct the pixels' light in different directions, so each eye sees only every alternate column of pixels. The graphics chip renders two images, one for the left eye and one for the right. These two images are displayed on the two sets of alternating columns of pixels."

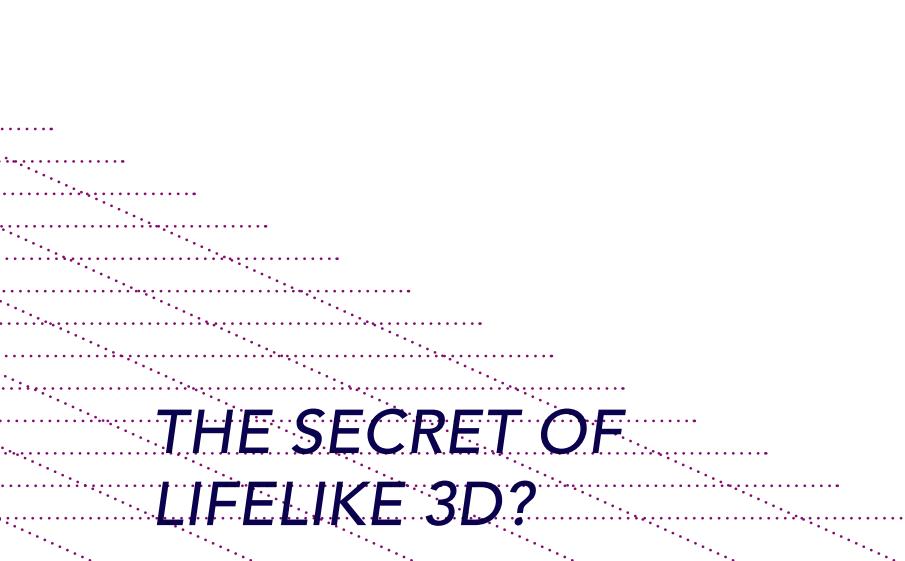
Also, Dodgson adds that, "to look as good as the current Nintendo hand-held, the new display will need to have twice the resolution on the underlying screen." Dodgson adds that lenticular tech does have its own set of limitations, mainly that: "Once you have got the 3D effect you cannot move your head left/right very much because otherwise your right eye would switch to a zone where it sees the left eye's image and vice-versa.

"You will also need to be roughly the right distance away from the screen for this to work well: too close or too far away and the effect will break up." Still, CVG speculates that using lenticular technology to achieve true 3D is more likely than Nintendo pursuing the "somewhat faked alternative used in Japanese DSiWare game, 3D Hidden Picture, which uses the DSi camera to track when the console is being moved, adjusting the on-screen image accordingly."

Analyst Michael Pachter thinks Nintendo is likely to aim for a similar price range to the £159.99 DSi XL. "Based on charging \$189 (US) for the DSi XL, my guess is that Nintendo will try to charge at least that much," Pachter told us.



"I think we all seek connections with others," Wheatley says. When we recognize life in a face, she says, we think, "This is a mind I can connect with."



THE SECRET OF LIFELIKE 3D?

EYE-OPENER

What makes a virtual face appear alive? According to a recent study published in Psychological Science the eyes are the most important factor in imparting life to the lifeless.

You can apply all the photorealistic textures you want to a 3D model, animating even the smallest facial tics, but without lifelike eyes your virtual human isn't much more than a puppet. At best it will just look silly. At worst it falls into the realm we call the uncanny valley, so close to life that its flaws are truly disturbing to the viewer.

Wheatley and Loosier conducted their study by photographing doll faces at toy stores, matching them with similar human faces, and then morphing between the two. You can see this in video form below. Volunteers were shown pictures of this process and asked to determine which pictures were human and which were dolls. The study found that around two-thirds of the way between doll and human was the point where volunteers started seeing real life in the pictures.

A separate experiment determined that of all of the facial features, the eyes were the most important in determining whether an image was of a real living creature. As you can see in the video, the eyes start going noticeably out-of-proportion once it hits a third of the way from human to doll. The study reminds me of a

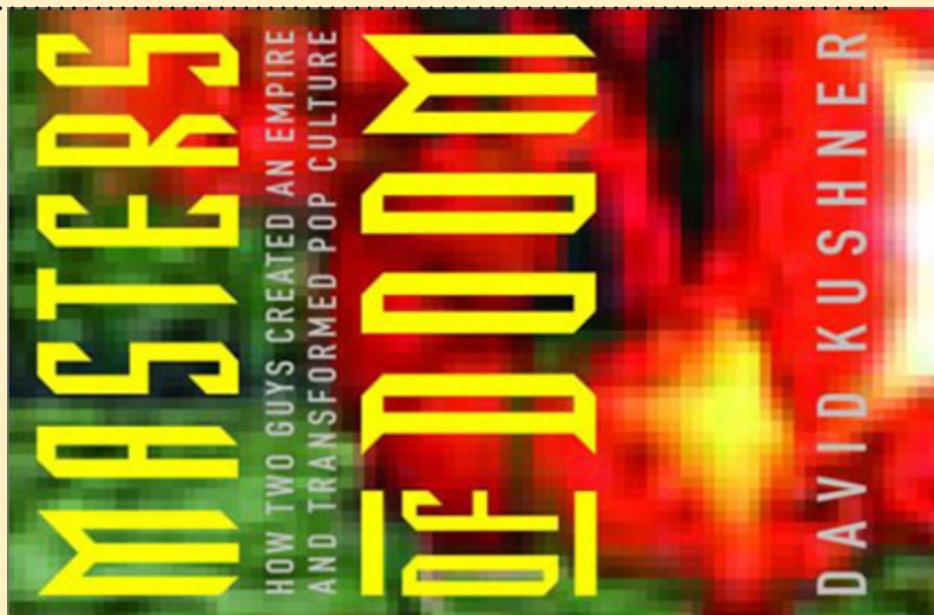
time when I was playing through Ninja Theory's Enslaved with my older brother. He continuously marveled over how lifelike the characters looked. During one particular cut scene he blurted out, "The eyes! It's their eyes. They look so real!"

Are the eyes the portal to the soul? They certainly seem to be a sure indicator of the soulless, and when we find ourselves disturbed by a virtual human treading through the uncanny valley, perhaps it's because we're looking for something that should be there but simply isn't.

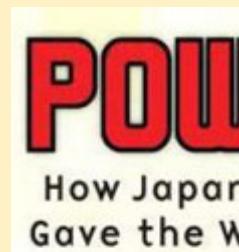
INDUSTRY : LITERATURE

Because people write books about gaming as well: we should read them!

As our hobby has matured, a compelling history has been slowly written that chronicles the history of gaming. To get you started, we here at MESH have created a brief reading list of three books that we consider essential for gamers to read. There are more books out there -- pretty good ones, too -- but the books below are amongst the cream of the crop when it comes to scholarly reads about the history of gaming. So put down the controller, close your laptop, turn off the television, and curl up with one (or all) of these books. If you really love gaming, then you won't be sorry you did.

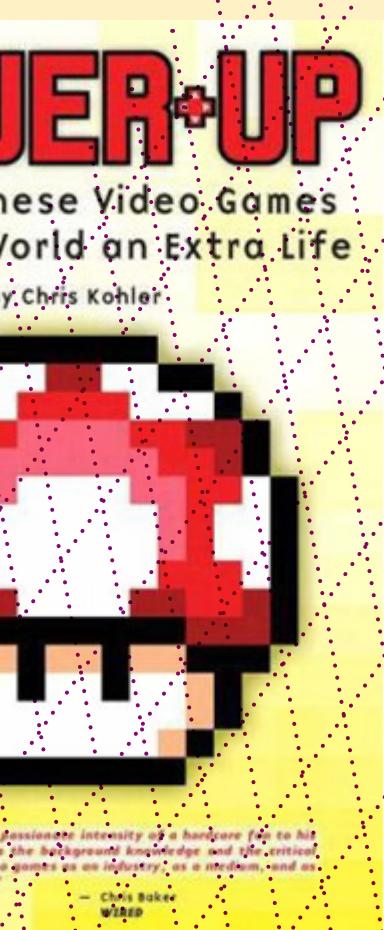


Out of the books on this list, **MASTERS OF DOOM** is probably the most outright riveting. Masters of Doom tells the story of now-famous game studio id Software -- from its humble beginnings and up through the 1990s and into the 2000s. Of course, it was the release of Doom in 1994 that truly cemented id as one of the premiere game developers in the industry, though it has plenty of games before and after Doom (from Commander Keen to Quake and beyond) that are worth reading about as well. And thankfully, Masters of Doom covers all of that in plenty of detail, too.





REPLAY is the most recent book on our list, and it covers games from a pretty unique angle. Unlike the other three game-centric books on this list, Replay comes from a more generalized and overarching perspective and tells the story of the industry from its very roots at laboratories on Long Island and school computer labs in Massachusetts and California to the present-day phenomenon we know all too well. Indeed, gaming's roots are incredibly humble and stretched out over decades. Tristan Donovan's exhaustive research pays credence to this fact and explores plenty of gaming's niches to tell an interesting story.



Let's face it: while Japan's prominence in gaming has fallen in recent years, the fact remains that Japan is the epicenter for the evolution of our favorite hobby, especially in terms of console gaming in the 1980s. A vast majority of the early companies in gaming in the 1970s were American, but by the time the bottom fell out of the industry in 1983, the major players would no longer be the likes of Atari and Coleco. Rather, they would be Japanese gaming companies like Nintendo, SEGA and Sony. Heck, when you think about great games on the NES (the first true infiltration of Japanese gaming into American homes apart from the arcades), you'd be hard-pressed to think of a game of note that came from a studio outside of Japan. That's how entrenched our industry was in Japanese influence following the crash.



HIDEKI KAMIYA

| devil may cry |

Dante, het hoofdpersonage uit de Devil May Cry reeks van Konami, veranderde sinds zijn debuut in 2001 niet ingrijpend van uiterlijk. Hideki Kamiya voorzag hem van witte haren en een felrode lange jas. Deze waren volgens hem de traditionele kleuren die Japanse helden kenmerkten. De held rookte en dronk bewust niet maar haalde vaak ondeugende grappen uit. Deze karaktertrekken sloegen de bal niet mis: ondertussen is Dante één van 's werelds meest iconische gamehelden. Groot ongenoegen dus bij gamers aller lande toen de trailer van de nieuwste telg op het net verscheen. Het gaat namelijk over een reboot: Dante kreeg een ingrijpende make-over en beleefde avonturen in een schijnbaar totaal nieuw universum. Wij bekijken de evolutie van onze held en proberen het waarom van de meest controversiële make-over sinds George Lucas op een dag te veel tijd en geld had, te ontsluieren.