

The Growing Pervasiveness of Games and Play

Hugh Davies

Swinburne University

ABSTRACT

Today, Australia boasts a broad and growing vocabulary of games and play. The ascendancy of cultures of games and play alongside the rise of various maker movements has, this paper argues, brought an increase in playful tendencies and aesthetics into built objects and experiences not traditionally associated with games. In fields as diverse as architecture, theatre, product design, craft and commerce, the tropes, textures and affinities of games and play are appearing more and more as expressive design features, elements of simplicity, functionality and beauty.

What accounts for this increase in ludic aesthetics in Australia? This paper argues that, away from the corporate explosion of ‘gamification’ and ‘funification’ that took stranglehold in recent years, the contemporary aesthetics of interaction and play introduced and discussed in this document, evidence a much broader and more encouraging literacy of games and play developing within Australian culture and society. Moreover, the entire discourse surrounding games has evolved. The distinct lingo of academic and gamer contexts remains, but increasingly a style of writing about games is emerging, one that appears crafted to embrace newcomers to the conversation about games, but not to games themselves.

For some, the widening of interest of games and play represents a threat to the field of games as a precious consumer niche: it signals the gentrification of an established culture and identity. Conversely, this paper argues that the shift reflects the local maturation of the fields of games and play.

Additionally, many of the causes motivating this growth in literacy are mapped. They include the explosion in popularity of digital games and the cultures that surround them, the reported struggles of local AAA studios and the rise of independent game houses, the mainstream media focus on the GamerGate controversy, the academic exploration of Australia’s games past, and the attention to the future of locally produced games and the conditions in which they are produced.

Keywords

Games, Play, Literacy, Australia

Proceedings of DiGRA Australia Queensland Symposium 2016: Wayfinding

BIO

Hugh Davies is an arts worker and researcher exploring the intersection of interactive media and fine art. With creative output spanning sculpture, moving image and games, his works have been presented in Europe the Americas, Asia and Australia. Hugh received his PhD from Monash University in 2014 for research into transmedia games and mixed reality experiences. He has previously taught at La Trobe University, University of South Australia, RMIT, Monash University, Royal Danish Art Academy and the Adelaide Centre for the Arts.

REFERENCES

- Davies, Hugh. "Ten Years Of Pushing Buttons: The Role Of Freeplay In Australian Games Discourse". *DIGRAA*. Melbourne: DIGRAA, 2014. Print.
- Golding, Dan. Game Studies' Australian Fringe: Communities, Critics and Conversation Round Table. *DIGRAA*. Melbourne: DIGRAA, 2014.
- Golding, Dan. "The End Of Gamers". *Dan Golding*. N.p., 2014. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.
- Stuckey, H. Swalwell, M. Ndalianis, A. de Vries, D. "Remembrance of games past: the popular memory archive". Proceedings of The 9th Australasian Conference on Interactive Entertainment, 2013.